Two Voices

54 duet scenes for teens

Peg Kehret and Brett Ko

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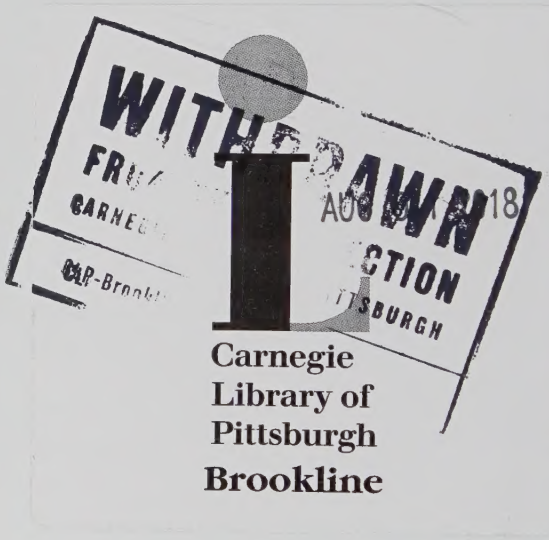
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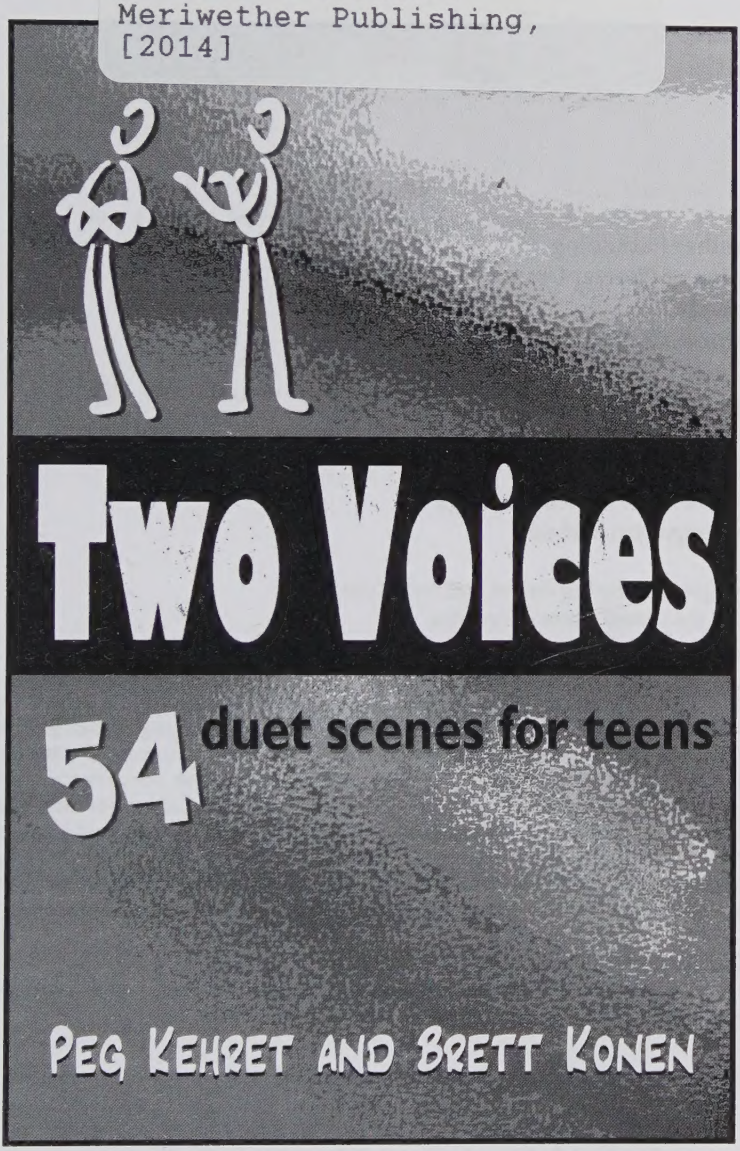
Brookline

PN2080.K355 2014
Kehret, Peg, author.
Two voices : 54 duet scenes for teens
Denver, Colorado : Meriwether Publishing, [2014]



MERIWETHER PUBLISHING
A division of Pioneer Drama Service, Inc.
Denver, Colorado

Meriwether Publishing
A division of Pioneer Drama Service, Inc.
PO Box 4267
Englewood, CO 80155

www.pioneerdrama.com

Editor: Theodore O. Zapel
Assistant editor: Nicole Rutledge
Cover design: Jan Melvin

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Printed in the United States of America
First Edition

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kehret, Peg.
Two voices : 54 original duologues for teens / by Peg Kehret and Brett Konen. -- First edition.
pages cm
ISBN 978-1-56608-196-2 (pbk.)
1. Dialogues. 2. Acting. I. Konen, Brett. II. Title.
PN2080.K355 2014
812'.54--dc23

2014000344

3 4 5 17 18 19

For Brett, a terrific co-author and granddaughter.
You bring me joy.
— Peg Kehret

For Moonie, my co-author and all-star grandma,
from whom I've learned writing and so much more.
— Brett Konen

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https://archive.org/details/twovoices54origi0000kehr

Table of Contents

Preface 1

1. Goldilocks and the Three Court Charges 3
2. An Honest Holiday Letter 7
3. Admit It, We're Lost 12
4. How Not to Get a Job 16
5. In the Market 21
6. How Was Your Trip? 25
7. The Showdown 29
8. Dear Sister 34
9. Pass the Peas 40
10. Parenting on Mt. Olympus 42
11. Best Little Town in Montana 47
12. The Alibi 51
13. North to Alaska 56
14. When You Walked Out 61
15. Prince Not-So-Charming 65
16. Hitchhikers 70
17. Goody, Two Shoes 76
18. No Solicitors 78
19. Cutesy-Wutesy Doggie-Woggie 82
20. The Ballad of Lewis and Clark 86
21. Yard Sale Treasures 91
22. The Choice 95
23. Runaway Slave 100
24. Too Tall, Too Short 105
25. Surviving the Ferris Wheel 108
26. Wedding Plans 111
27. Now Hiring 116
28. Dear Crabby 120
29. The World's Finest Cutlery 125
30. Forced to Go to Camp 134

31. Mourning a Noun Cements 138
32. Paul Revere's Publicist 144
33. The Worst Day Ever 149
34. Mall Survey 154
35. Pick Me Up at Eight 157
36. Clever Cat, Devoted Dog 162
37. That's How Rumors Start 166
38. Teen Reading Club 170
39. Hair Salon Gossip 174
40. Adoption Day 179
41. National Threat 183
42. Nummy's Fudge Shop Diet 190
43. Between Hipsters 194
44. Shopping for Bargains 199
45. The Tooth Fairy Conspiracy 204
46. Yellowstone National Yawn 209
47. My Rotten Roommate 214
48. Coyote Passage 219
49. Where There's a Will 223
50. Focus 229
51. Snow White and the Fortune Teller 234
52. The Brit and the Yank 239
53. Backstage Pass 245
54. Two by Two 249

About the Authors 253

Preface

The duologues in this book are intended for use in a wide variety of settings, from speech contests to auditions to class assignments to performance practice. Each scene presents distinctive viewpoints on issues ranging from simple to complex. All are meant to provoke thought and inspire discussion as well as to entertain.

Some scenes — "Pass the Peas," "Goody, Two Shoes," and "Two by Two" among them — play with language. Others — including "Goldilocks and the Three Court Charges" and "Parenting on Mt. Olympus" — are purely for fun. Several — like "North to Alaska" and "The Brit and the Yank" — are fictional portrayals of historic events. We also explore more serious topics: family relationships, immigration, preoccupation with weight, erosion of citizens' rights, consumerism, college decisions, and how to get a job.

We have assigned names and genders to some characters in this book, but the majority of the roles can be played by either a male or a female. Names may be changed as desired.

We hope that these duologues will inspire their audiences to laugh, think, and respond honestly.

— Peg Kehret and Brett Konen

1. Goldilocks and the Three Court Charges

Cast: GOLDILOCKS and ATTORNEY for the bears
Setting: Courtroom
Props: None

ATTORNEY: Your Honor, I will now present the charges against Goldilocks.

GOLDILOCKS: Charges? What charges? I didn't do anything wrong.

ATTORNEY: You are in big trouble, girl. You can't just stroll into someone else's house uninvited and eat their porridge and sit in their chairs and sleep in their beds. What were you thinking?

GOLDILOCKS: I was lost in the woods! I knocked, and nobody answered the door, so I went in to see if there was a phone I could use. The battery on mine was dead.

ATTORNEY: Did you use the bears' telephone?

GOLDILOCKS: No. When I got inside, I saw the bowls of porridge, and I was so hungry that I started to eat. When I finally found a bowl that was the right temperature, I gobbled it all up, even though it was awfully bland. The bears really should add cinnamon or raisins to their porridge. Brown sugar would be good too, with a few walnuts. I wonder if the bears have ever tried granola or a toasted bagel for breakfast. Maybe I should send them my recipe for blueberry bran muffins.

ATTORNEY: The bears don't need any recipes. Just answer the questions, please. Why didn't you call for help after you ate?

GOLDILOCKS: I was tired, and the warm porridge made me so sleepy that I forgot all about being lost.

ATTORNEY: You also forgot that there are laws against

uninvited entry. Papa and Mama Bear have accused you of trespassing. This hearing is to determine if the charges warrant going to trial.

GOLDILOCKS: Well, that is just about the meanest thing I've ever heard. They're charging me with a crime? *I* should be suing *them!*

ATTORNEY: For what?

GOLDILOCKS: Reckless endangerment! The first bowl of porridge was way too hot. I burned my tongue! If I had eaten it, my throat would be scalded. And that third chair was a safety hazard. I'm lucky I didn't break a bone when it collapsed under me.

ATTORNEY: You can't sue them for reckless endangerment when you were in their house uninvited. They are already suing you over the broken chair. In addition to trespassing, you're charged with destruction of private property.

GOLDILOCKS: You're kidding me, right? That piece-of-junk chair was on its last legs already. I'll bet the Salvation Army would have refused it as a donation. I did those bears a huge favor by sitting on it before one of them did. They should be giving me a reward for saving them from serious injury.

ATTORNEY: Any judge will throw out your claim of reckless endangerment. That chair was perfectly safe for Baby Bear.

GOLDLOCKS: I can sue the bears for attempted kidnapping! They chased me into the woods, and if they had caught me, they would have taken me back to their house against my will.

ATTORNEY: The bears chased you because they found you asleep in Baby Bear's bed. They weren't trying to kidnap you – they were pursuing the person who trespassed in their home. They only wanted to catch you and bring you to justice for stealing from them.

Besides trespassing and destruction of private property, the bears accuse you of petty theft.

GOLDILOCKS: Petty theft? I didn't steal anything! They didn't have anything worth stealing. No iPods, no computers, no DVD players. Nothing but honey pots.

ATTORNEY: What about their porridge? You've already admitted to this court that you ate Baby Bear's porridge.

GOLDILOCKS: OK! So I ate a bowl of crummy porridge. That hardly seems like a criminal offense. They didn't even have spoons. I had to use my fingers. And it definitely needed dried cranberries or a sprinkling of nutmeg.

ATTORNEY: The porridge may not have been to your liking, but you cannot dispute the fact that it belonged to the three bears. You had no right to eat it.

GOLDILOCKS: Had I known how selfish the three bears would be, I would never have gone near their cottage. Instead of chasing me away, they should have offered to call me a cab or invited me to stay for dinner. Although if their dinner was as unappetizing as their breakfast, I wouldn't have wanted to eat it, anyway.

ATTORNEY: If someone you had never met came into your home while you were gone and broke your furniture and ate your food, and then you found that person sleeping in your bed, would you invite her to stick around?

GOLDILOCKS: When you put it that way, no, I don't suppose I would. But I wouldn't file a bunch of lawsuits, either. What a waste of time and money! The bears are going to spend way more on legal fees than it would cost to buy a new chair and more porridge.

ATTORNEY: Shhhh! Don't let them hear you say that.

GOLDILOCKS: The three bears don't need you. All they

need is a lock for their door. *(She hollers toward Stage Left.)* **Do you hear me, bears? Instead of hiring this charlatan, spend your money on something worthwhile, like cable TV for your cottage!**

ATTORNEY: If they drop their charges against you, would you be interested in having me represent you in your claim of attempted kidnapping?

GOLDILOCKS: No. I've decided not to sue the three bears.

ATTORNEY: Too bad. I guess I'll have to take the case of Little Bo Peep versus The Department of Sheep Health and Welfare.

2. An Honest Holiday Letter

Cast: SISTER and BROTHER

Setting: No special set required.

Props: Both characters have a notebook and pencil or a laptop computer.

Costume: Sister wears a knit cap.

SISTER: I love holiday letters! It's so cool to read everything that people have done all year, and now we get to write one for our family. It's about time Mom and Dad let us do it. They've written the holiday letter every year for forever. It's usually all about us kids and our activities anyway, so why not let us write it ourselves?

BROTHER: This is so stupid. Who wants to read every detail of our boring lives? What a waste of time and paper. Mom and Dad are making us do it this year because neither of them can stand to write about our rotten lives.

SISTER: How to begin? Oh, I know! *(Starts to write.)*

BROTHER: I have yet to read an interesting holiday letter. The worst are the ones that start out by saying, "It's that time of year again when we write to our family and friends." I mean, we *know* it's that time of year or we would not be reading holiday letters, right?

SISTER: *(Reads what she wrote.)* **"It's that time of year again when we write to our family and friends."**

BROTHER: Then they go on to brag about all the wonderful things that their family has done. Fabulous vacations. New jobs with big salaries. Scholarships for the kids. The dog won "Best in Show."

SISTER: *(Continues to write.)* **"It's been a fantastic year for our family, with lots of exciting news."**

BROTHER: Well, Mom said I have to do this. *(Starts to write.)*

"Yo dudes! You are about to read the first-ever honest holiday letter."

SISTER: "I'll start with my dad. After working hard all his adult life, Dad got to enjoy an extended vacation this year and a chance to follow his lifetime dream of being a freelance writer."

BROTHER: "The year had a crummy start in January when my dad got laid off. He'd worked at the underwear factory for twenty-three years, so it was a blow when the factory downsized and laid off fifty workers."

SISTER: "It only took him six months to finish his book, *The Insider's Guide to Underwear That Fits.*"

BROTHER: "Finding another job in our small town proved impossible, especially when forty-nine other people with his identical experience started looking for work at the same time, so he decided to write a book."

SISTER: "With his book done, he began the search for a literary agent and a publisher. What a great learning experience!"

BROTHER: "So far it has been rejected by twenty-seven literary agents and forty-four publishers. The only positive response he got was from a vanity press that wanted him to pay them four thousand dollars to print the book."

SISTER: "Watch for our holiday letter next year to see the for-sale date of Dad's book. You'll want an autographed copy. By then, we expect to announce that the movie rights have also been sold. Rumor has it that Tom Cruise is interested."

BROTHER: "Between losing his job and not selling his book, Dad is none too perky these days. His new hobby is watching golf on TV."

SISTER: "Now on to my mom. Mom decided this was the

year for our family to get organized. What a whiz she is at cleaning out closets and tidying up shelves! We expect to be featured in *Good Housekeeping* soon."

BROTHER: "With Dad moping around, Mom went into overdrive. As soon as she got home from work every day, she started going through closets and drawers, looking for stuff to sell on eBay. She seemed to think we could make up for Dad's loss of income with old Beanie Babies."

SISTER: "Mom also started her own home business and soon got the rest of us involved in helping her with it."

BROTHER: "She nagged at me until I went through every single item in my room and gave her all the old toys and other things I don't use anymore. She even tried to talk me into selling my baseball cards, but I drew the line at that."

SISTER: "We decided to help the planet by going green! Riding our bikes is great exercise and we are reducing our carbon footprints."

BROTHER: "Our good car was repossessed in April. We still have the clunker and Mom uses that to get to work, but the rest of us either have to walk or ride our bikes. One day, I had to ride my bike home from school in a hailstorm."

SISTER: "It was a big year for me. I got what every teenager waits for – my driver's license!"

BROTHER: "It's probably just as well we don't have the good car anymore because my sister finally passed her driver's test. It took her three tries, and even then, she barely squeaked by. Dad says the only reason she got her license was because the person who gives the test got tired of riding with her. The first day she had her license, she backed into the mailbox at the end of our driveway. Now she isn't

allowed to drive the car unless Mom or Dad goes with her."

SISTER: "Of course, I don't drive much because we're going green, but it's still exciting to have my license. My other big news is that I have a new hair color."

BROTHER: "The reason we are not including a family photo this year is because my sister totally ruined her hair trying to put in highlights. She did it herself and got distracted talking on the phone. She left the solution on too long and ended up with big patches of hair that are this bilious yellow-green color."

SISTER: "I had entered our town's Miss Preppy Pageant, and I decided to experiment and go for a nontraditional look."

BROTHER: "She tried to lessen the damage by dyeing all her hair blonde. It's the ugliest mess you ever saw. She had to withdraw from the Miss Preppy Pageant because she refuses to take her hat off."

SISTER: "Did you know that knit caps are *in* this year? I'm upholding my reputation as a trendsetter."

BROTHER: "My year wasn't any better than the rest of my family's. I tried out for the football team and didn't make it. Then I tried out for soccer and didn't make that either."

SISTER: "My brother spent the fall months heavily involved in school sports."

BROTHER: "Since athletics weren't working for me, I joined the debate club. The first topic they gave me was, 'Why School Sports Are Important.' I wasn't very convincing."

SISTER: "Being the big brain that he is, Bro excelled at debate. He even placed in his very first debate tournament."

BROTHER: "There were eight kids on the debate team. I got eighth place."

SISTER: "Many holiday letters include the family pet. We are currently looking for the perfect pet to adopt and can't wait to give a loving home to a needy animal."

BROTHER: "Besides losing Dad's job, the good car, the debate tournament, and the Miss Preppy Pageant, we also lost both our pets this year. Grungie the gerbil somehow got out of his cage and the neighbor's cat ate him. Tweety Bird fell victim to a tainted package of birdseed."

SISTER: "That's all the news from here. I hope next year is even better than this one was."

BROTHER: "This whole year was the pits, and I suspect next year will be the same."

BROTHER and SISTER: *(Together)* **"Happy holidays!"**

3. Admit It, We're Lost

Cast: CAMERON and SKYLER

Setting: Front seat of a car. Two chairs face the audience as seats of the car.

Props: None

CAMERON: I think we're lost.
SKYLER: No, we're not.
CAMERON: Where are we, then?
SKYLER: We're nearly there.
CAMERON: I'm telling you, we're headed in the wrong direction. I haven't seen anything familiar for miles.
SKYLER: I know where we're going.
CAMERON: We should have printed directions. I knew we should have printed directions.
SKYLER: I have an internal compass. Directions slow me down.
CAMERON: Had I searched the directions? Yes. Did I have them pulled up on the computer screen? Yes.
SKYLER: Were you about to kill a tree and widen the hole in the ozone layer by printing them? Yes.
CAMERON: I'm telling you, I read them. None of these street names sound familiar. Do you realize you're on West Cricket Chirp Lane? Doesn't exactly sound like a thoroughfare, does it?
SKYLER: Of course not. It's a shortcut.
CAMERON: A shortcut! Do you remember the last time you tried to take us on one of your "shortcuts"? We were two hours late to the wedding!
SKYLER: I've said it before, and I'll say it again. Computer directions are convoluted. Have you ever used them to get home from somewhere? They take you miles off course! MapQuest is probably sponsored by oil companies who want you to burn through an extra

gallon of gas with every trip.

CAMERON: Oil companies are probably doubly delighted every time you drive somewhere. We're going in gas-guzzling circles. We've definitely passed that cow mailbox before.

SKYLER: Just because you can't get anywhere without your GPS talking at you the whole way doesn't mean we're all directionally challenged. *(Mimics robotically.)* "In a quarter-mile, take a left turn."

CAMERON: I'm going to buy you a GPS for Christmas. They're miraculous.

SKYLER: It's going in the storage shed with the atlas you bought me last Christmas. You don't mess with an internal compass.

CAMERON: The lasagna is getting cold in the backseat. So much for all the time I spent on a nice potluck contribution. We'll be lucky to get dessert.

SKYLER: Please. Last time we got to your sister's house for dinner, she hadn't even put the bread in the oven.

CAMERON: Yes, because we got there early. And as I recall, I drove.

SKYLER: You mean your GPS drove. Siri interrupted us the entire way.

CAMERON: Do you have maps on your phone?

SKYLER: Don't be ridiculous. Know what I use my phone for? Phone calls.

CAMERON: Wait, there's someone walking up ahead! Pull over. I'll ask him how to get back on the freeway if you're too embarrassed.

SKYLER: Embarrassed! Of what?

CAMERON: Exactly. You shouldn't be embarrassed that we're lost. It's only embarrassing if you refuse to admit it – What are you doing? You passed him!

SKYLER: He looked clueless.

CAMERON: So do you. That doesn't mean I refuse to talk

to you.

SKYLER: If we're not there in five minutes we'll stop at a gas station.

CAMERON: I haven't seen a gas station in ages.

SKYLER: Then I guess it's a good thing we won't need to stop.

CAMERON: You're impossible. I'm starving, we're more lost by the minute, and you'd rather imprison me in this moving vehicle than let me ask someone for help.

SKYLER: And get us even more lost?

CAMERON: Ha! So you admit it! You are lost!

SKYLER: If I'm not lost now, asking that man certainly would have done the trick.

CAMERON: We might not see anyone else. It's getting dark, and all I see are fields.

SKYLER: We're going as the crow flies, my dear. Cutting past all the freeway traffic.

CAMERON: We're also cutting past all the roads we recognize.

SKYLER: It's scenic.

CAMERON: Do you have any paper napkins? I'm going to have a piece of lasagna.

SKYLER: If you're not going to wait for the dinner, maybe we should just head back home now.

CAMERON: I'd like to see you try to get home from here! Do you even know what town this is?

SKYLER: It's not the destination but the journey that counts.

CAMERON: Can I see your non-mapping telephone? It's time to call my sister.

SKYLER: Oh, ye of little faith.

CAMERON: Hey, wait. This street looks familiar. Doesn't this street look familiar? Haven't we been by this house before?

SKYLER: Ha! What did I tell you? Admit it, you were wrong and I was right.

CAMERON: I've definitely seen that tree stump.

SKYLER: I have too. It's all coming back now.

CAMERON: We must be getting close! What does that sign say?

SKYLER: Pah, signs. Who needs 'em?

CAMERON: Oh, good grief! We're back on Cricket Chirp Lane!

SKYLER: Oh. Are you sure?

CAMERON: Agh! We'll never make it!

SKYLER: Jeez, what's the big deal? I'm just going to pull over and ask that guy up there for directions. Honestly, I think you'll have a conniption one of these days.

CAMERON: I probably will, and when I do, I'd like someone other than you to drive me to the hospital.

4. How Not to Get a Job

Cast: CARTER and SARAH
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None
Costume: Sarah is neatly dressed. Carter wears sloppy clothes and a dirty baseball cap.

SARAH: I got it! I got a job!
CARTER: What job? I didn't know you were applying for a job.
SARAH: I've been looking for a summer job for weeks. Yesterday I saw a "Help Wanted" sign in the window at Jasper's Java, so I went in and asked about it. They gave me an application to fill out and said the manager wasn't there, but he'd be in today. I hung around awhile and talked to a couple of the people who work there, and I bought two different coffee drinks. I also got the manager's name. Today I went back and asked for Jasper Johnson, and he talked to me. He asked me why I want to work there, so I told him I love the friendly atmosphere at Jasper's Java and my favorite drink is Jasper's Three Bean, and I got hired!
CARTER: Congratulations! When do you start?
SARAH: On Saturday. I'll work after school and on Saturdays until school is out and then full time this summer.
CARTER: I'm impressed. I know about a zillion people who are applying for jobs, and you're the first one who actually got hired. I've been applying myself, but so far I haven't had any interviews.
SARAH: Where have you applied?
CARTER: Any place that runs a "Help Wanted" ad. I follow Craigslist and the newspaper. I send my resume to all of them, but I haven't heard back from anybody. I've

probably emailed thirty or forty resumes.

SARAH: Do you send a cover letter too?

CARTER: A what?

SARAH: A cover letter. You know, "Dear Mr. Bossperson, I have been a customer of yours for a long time because I love your products, and I'd like an opportunity to work for you."

CARTER: I just say, "To Whom It May Concern: Please see attached resume."

SARAH: That isn't very personal. You should at least use the person's name.

CARTER: I don't know their names.

SARAH: Then you need to find out. You go to whatever business it is and you tell them you want to apply for a job and ask for the name of the person who handles applications.

CARTER: Go there? You mean in person?

SARAH: Yes, in person. Get cleaned up and take a stack of resumes and go from place to place.

CARTER: I have to get dressed up?

SARAH: You don't have to wear a suit and tie to apply at a fast food restaurant, but yes, you would need to be clean. You'd probably want to ditch the baseball cap.

CARTER: If I got hired, I'd wear clean clothes to work.

SARAH: How is the boss supposed to know that? If you show up looking like a slob, he'll think you always look that way.

CARTER: They should hire me for my skills, not because I wear the latest fashions.

SARAH: What skills?

CARTER: The skills I'll learn on the job as soon as I get hired. I'm a fast learner.

SARAH: You haven't learned much about how to apply for a job. You need to look respectable and tell your prospective employers what you can do that would

make you valuable to them.
CARTER: Like what?
SARAH: You have a computer, right?
CARTER: Yes.
SARAH: What programs do you know? Can you use Word? Have you done any programming? Do you know how to make a spreadsheet?
CARTER: I use Word. I haven't done a spreadsheet, but I publish an online newsletter for a car club that I belong to.
SARAH: That's perfect! Add that to your resume.
CARTER: The car club? What if the boss isn't into cars?
SARAH: It isn't the cars that matter, it's the fact that you know how to do online publishing. What else to you do in your car club?
CARTER: We get together and work on our cars. Or we go for drives. Or we just hang out and talk, mostly about cars.
SARAH: Is it an official club, with officers?
CARTER: Yeah. I'm the president.
SARAH: Great! Put that on your resume too. It shows that you have leadership qualities.
CARTER: No it doesn't. It shows that nobody else would be the president. I only got elected because I wasn't there that night to say no.
SARAH: What kind of jobs are you applying for?
CARTER: Anything. I answer every ad.
SARAH: Where did you send your last application? What company?
CARTER: It was a private party. They want a nanny for a two-year-old and an infant.
SARAH: Do you have any experience with little kids? Do you know how to give a baby a bath? Have you ever changed a dirty diaper?
CARTER: No experience. No bath. And definitely no dirty

diapers.

SARAH: Do you *want* to do those things?

CARTER: Are you kidding? Who in their right mind would *want* to change dirty diapers?

SARAH: Then why did you apply for the nanny job?

CARTER: It pays fifteen dollars an hour. Forty-five hours a week. That's big bucks!

SARAH: That's a lot of dirty diapers. You would *hate* being a nanny for those kids.

CARTER: I'd hate it, but I'd be rich.

SARAH: You'd be rich, frustrated, and bored. Why don't you apply for a job working on cars?

CARTER: There aren't any "Help Wanted" ads from auto shops.

SARAH: Go to the car places in person. Tell them you love cars. Tell them you're president of a car club, and then ask if you can leave a resume in case they ever have an opening. Even if they aren't looking for help now, someone might quit tomorrow and then they'd remember you.

CARTER: Good idea. I'll do it right now.

SARAH: No! Go home and take a shower first, and put on clean clothes.

CARTER: If I get hired to fix cars, this is what I'll wear. I'm not getting grease all over my good clothes. My mom would have a fit.

SARAH: You have to make a decent first impression. Maybe they don't need a mechanic right now. Maybe they need someone to greet the customers and find out what service their car needs.

CARTER: Oh. It seems like a lot of trouble when they aren't even running a "Help Wanted" ad.

SARAH: Jasper's Java didn't advertise anywhere either, except for the sign in their window. Jasper told me he wanted applicants who came to Jasper's Java because

they like the place and not just because they want a job. I think I got hired because I said Jasper's Three Bean is my favorite drink.

CARTER: I'm going to apply at every car repair shop in town! Even if I don't get hired, it will be fun to check all of them out.

SARAH: Good luck!

CARTER: Are you sure I can't wear my baseball cap?

5. In the Market

Cast: SALESMAN and CUSTOMER

Setting: A Persian market. Two chairs and a small tea table are Center Stage.

Props: A teapot and two cups, a sugar bowl, four larger bowls of different colors, and a piece of paper to serve as a receipt. The tea service is on the table. The bowls are nearby toward Stage Left. Salesman has the piece of paper in his pocket.

(As scene opens, SALESMAN is Center Stage looking around expectantly. CUSTOMER enters Stage Left walking slowly, and pauses to look over the bowls.)

SALESMAN: Hello! You there!

CUSTOMER: What? Oh, hello.

SALESMAN: You like that bowl?

CUSTOMER: I'm just looking.

SALESMAN: Today is your lucky day, my friend, because it's very affordable!

CUSTOMER: I'm not in the market for a bowl.

SALESMAN: But you are in the market! The Grand Sunday Market! *(Gesturing all around)*

CUSTOMER: I mean, I'm here. But not for a bowl. For spices.

SALESMAN: Pah! Spices! You can get spices anywhere. The bowls I have here are one of a kind.

CUSTOMER: I think I just saw some of these bowls a few stands back.

SALESMAN: No, no, no, no, no. Not these bowls. There are no others like them.

CUSTOMER: I guess I was confused.

SALESMAN: I can see that you don't believe me.

CUSTOMER: I've got to be going ...

SALESMAN: But you must join me for a cup of apple tea!

CUSTOMER: That's very kind of you. But I really need to be

going.

SALESMAN: *(Offering a chair)* **Please, do sit down.**

CUSTOMER: I appreciate it, but ... *(Sits down reluctantly, and the SALESMAN sits across the table from the CUSTOMER.)* **I really don't like apple tea.**

SALESMAN: Aha! But have you ever tasted *my* apple tea?

CUSTOMER: Well, no, but –

SALESMAN: Travelers come from miles around for my apple tea.

CUSTOMER: I'm sure they do.

SALESMAN: You must try it. My son just made a fresh pot. *(Begins to serve tea.)*

CUSTOMER: All right. Just a sip, and then I'll head out.

SALESMAN: Here we are. Sugar cube?

CUSTOMER: No, thank you.

SALESMAN: You must have a sugar cube. It is the only way to drink the tea. *(Adds sugar cube to teacup.)*

CUSTOMER: OK.

SALESMAN: Now tell me, my friend, where are you from?

CUSTOMER: I'm from Washington.

SALESMAN: Ah, America! I love California. Do you know my cousin? He lives in Texas.

CUSTOMER: Probably not.

SALESMAN: And what brings you to this market?

CUSTOMER: I'm on vacation with my family, and right now I'm looking for spices. I need some cardamom.

SALESMAN: How much would you like to spend on a bowl?

CUSTOMER: I don't want a bowl. I have bowls.

SALESMAN: *(Standing and returning with a bowl)* **This bowl right here is the finest craftsmanship available – made by hand by my brother. It is worth at least two hundred dollars. I can sell it to you alone for the very good price of one hundred dollars.**

CUSTOMER: A hundred dollars! I would never spend a hundred dollars on a bowl.

SALESMAN: You won't find a better price anywhere.
CUSTOMER: I'm not looking for a better price anywhere.
SALESMAN: I can see you know the value of money. Very well. I can offer this to you for the special, one-time-only price of ninety dollars.
CUSTOMER: Come on. We both know this bowl isn't worth half that. Look here – the paint's chipped.
SALESMAN: I see no chip. This one is from my uncle's stand anyway. *(Hiding it underneath his chair)* I'll be giving it back to him.
CUSTOMER: And anyway, it wouldn't match anything in my house.
SALESMAN: *(Standing up and hurrying over to get another bowl)* You like purple. I can tell when my customers like purple. This here is a very beautiful purple bowl, excellent craftsmanship –
CUSTOMER: Purple?
SALESMAN: *(Hurrying the bowl away)* I can't stand purple, either. My uncle, all he sells are purple bowls. Tasteless, I always tell him. You like yellow. I can tell. *(Coming back with another bowl)*
CUSTOMER: My house is all green.
SALESMAN: *(Hurrying the bowl away and returning with another)* I knew it! My friend, it is your lucky day. This is my very finest bowl, this green one here. Many people have tried to buy it – I will only part with it for a good friend like you. I can offer you my very lowest, secret price ... eighty dollars.
CUSTOMER: It's not worth forty.
SALESMAN: Oho! But you are talking insanity. Imagine, parting with the finest of my wares for barely more than pennies.
CUSTOMER: I'll bet you buy these for five bucks apiece. If that!
SALESMAN: *(Affronted)* The hand-painted designs! The

meticulous craftsmanship! You know not what you say, my dear friend. And yet, fool that I am, I will humor you – do you promise not to tell? If you promise not to tell my other customers how very cheaply I am selling you this treasure, I will offer you my very last price ... seventy dollars, no lower.

CUSTOMER: I'd like to see you try to get fifty for it.

SALESMAN: What a joker! Sixty-five, final offer.

CUSTOMER: If you think I'm spending more than fifty-five on that bowl, you're out of your mind.

SALESMAN: My friend, you're going to haggle my family out of house and home. All right. Sixty dollars, final offer.

CUSTOMER: Done! Ha! One hundred dollars, indeed.

SALESMAN: *(Taking receipt quickly from pocket)* **If you'll just sign right here –**

CUSTOMER: Wait a second. What am I saying? I don't need a bowl! I need spices! *(Standing up)* **I've got to go.**

SALESMAN: All right, all right, I can see you're determined to have my bowl for fifty dollars.

CUSTOMER: I'm sorry. I'm running late.

SALESMAN: *(Also standing)* **I see! Very well! Forty dollars!**

CUSTOMER: Thank you for the tea ... *(Starts to walk away.)*

SALESMAN: *(Walking after CUSTOMER)* **Forty for two! Two bowls!**

CUSTOMER: Good-bye!

SALESMAN: And I'll throw in two teacups!

CUSTOMER: Have a good day!

SALESMAN: And this sugar bowl! *(CUSTOMER exits Stage Right.)*

SALESMAN: OK. Come back next time! *(Throws up hands, stops, and turns to look around.)* **Why, hello! You there! Do you like that bowl?**

6. How Was Your Trip?

Cast: TRAVELER and PIONEER
Setting: No special set
Props: Backpack for Traveler
Costume: Pioneer is female. If desired, she can dress in costume from the 1840s.

(As scene opens, TRAVELER and PIONEER enter from opposite sides of the stage and stand beside each other. TRAVELER is wearing the backpack.)

TRAVELER: Flying is such a hassle. My flight was at six-thirty in the morning, which meant I had to get up at four to be at the airport on time. No one should have to get out of bed at four in the morning.

PIONEER: Our wagon train will leave at first light tomorrow morning. After all the planning and tearful good-byes, we rode ten days to this rendezvous site in Missouri, and then spent another six days loading our provisions. Tomorrow, finally, we will be on our way west.

TRAVELER: I double-checked my backpack to be sure I had everything I needed. Phone, boarding pass, ID, wallet, and a book to read on the flight.

PIONEER: The supply wagon is loaded with one hundred and fifty pounds of flour, sixty pounds of rice, twenty pounds of sugar, and some salt and pepper. A milk cow will walk beside us.

TRAVELER: The line to get through security took forever. It's amazing I didn't miss my flight while they made sure I didn't have a bomb hidden in my underwear. What a pain. Took off my shoes. Took off my jacket. Put my watch in the little bin so the metal detector didn't beep.

PIONEER: The trail is full of holes and littered with rocks.

After bouncing in the wagon for the first few miles, I chose to ride one of the horses. Even riding sidesaddle, as befits a proper lady, I am already so sore that I doubt I'll be able to move tomorrow.

TRAVELER: Wouldn't you know it? My seat was in the center. I requested a window or an aisle seat, but no. I was stuck in the middle. I hate sitting in the middle. There's no elbow space, and of course, leg room on a plane is nonexistent no matter where you sit. The man next to me was snoring. He got the window seat, but instead of looking at the view, he fell asleep before we took off.

PIONEER: The oxen move slowly, pulling their heavy loads. I thought the day would never end, and after we finally stopped for the night, I still had to gather buffalo dung to use as fuel so we could cook our meal.

TRAVELER: I bought a sandwich at the airport to eat during the flight, and when I opened the bag, I found the wrong order. Instead of turkey on whole wheat bread, I got roast beef on rye. I don't even like rye. Instead of plain chips, I got barbecue, and they gave me an apple instead of the chocolate chip cookie that I ordered. I picked the meat out of the sandwich, ate the chips, and tossed the apple.

PIONEER: Our meal was rice, beans, and pan biscuits. We shared an apple, savoring it because once the fresh fruit is gone, we'll have no more until we reach California. We have no dishpan so we heated water in the cooking pot to wash our dishes. It is only our first night, and already I miss having a real bed. The ground is hard. My bones ache.

TRAVELER: I had already seen the movie that they showed. It was a stupid movie that I didn't like the first time, and I sure didn't want to watch it again. I didn't buy a headset, but even without sound, the

screen kept catching my attention.

PIONEER: The air is filled with gnats. Their bites are worse than mosquitoes! The paste of vinegar and salt that we made to repel them is not working. I wave my hands around my face and neck constantly, but I still get bit.

TRAVELER: You want to hear the worst part? I had to go to the bathroom. I meant to go in the airport right before we boarded, but it took so long to get through security that I didn't have time. I detest the restrooms on airplanes. They are cramped and stuffy, plus it was embarrassing because the bathroom was occupied when I got there, so I had to stand up in front and wait my turn while every passenger in the coach section stared at me.

PIONEER: The worst part of this journey is the lack of privacy. There are no trees on the prairie, just huge open spaces as far as the eye can travel. When I need to relieve myself, I have no shrub or tree to hide behind; I must do my body's business where everyone can watch. Of course, all the others have to do that too, so we are courteous and try never to look, but it is hard to lift my petticoats and pull down my bloomers in full view of all.

TRAVELER: I was still in the bathroom when the captain announced that we might experience some mild turbulence and told everyone to buckle their seatbelts. I hurried back to my seat, and the woman on the aisle had to unbuckle and stand up to let me back in. She didn't say anything, but I could tell she was annoyed.

PIONEER: We crossed our first river today. The cold water rushed by waist deep as we struggled to the far side. One of the mules bolted and caused a wagon to tip over. I saw that family's food supplies, so carefully stored and rationed out, spill into the water. My papa

grabbed a bag of flour and carried it to the far bank for them, but it was tainted from the river water and had to be thrown away. The rest of us will share our food with this unfortunate family, but I fear what will happen at future river crossings.

TRAVELER: The captain's idea of mild turbulence was not the same as mine. My seat bumped and dipped as if I were saddled to a bucking horse rather than strapped into an airplane. I was afraid someone would get sick. I saw the woman next to me check to see if she had a barf bag. If she had used it, I'd probably have been sick too from the smell. It was the worst flight I've ever experienced.

PIONEER: Most days we travel between fifteen and twenty miles. One of the children in the lead wagon, a boy of seven years, has taken sick. We fear he might have cholera. There is no doctor among us, and cholera is usually fatal. I pray for this child to be healed, but as the dust blows in my eyes and sweat trickles down my neck, I wonder if anyone is listening.

TRAVELER: The turbulence ended with all barf bags empty, and we made our final descent into the airport twenty minutes late. I couldn't wait to get off that plane! I'm already dreading the return flight.

PIONEER: We buried little Joseph on the prairie. His distraught family did not want to leave him in this desolate place, but there was no choice. We have come less than two hundred miles of the two thousand we will travel. I wish we could sprout wings and fly like the birds. We could reach our destination in a matter of hours, rather than months. But that is not possible.

TRAVELER: Sometimes I think the good old days of covered wagons and horseback were a better way to travel.

7. The Showdown

Cast: RILEY and RYAN. This duologue works best with players of the same gender.

Setting: A poker table. Two chairs are at the table.

Props: A deck of cards, poker chips, and a set of car keys.

(As scene opens, RILEY and RYAN are seated facing each other across the table, slouching as if they have been playing for a while. Deck of cards is face down in the middle of the table. Each player has a modest stack of poker chips beside him. Keys are in RYAN's pocket.)

RILEY: Your deal. *(RYAN picks up cards and begins to shuffle.)* **What do you want to bet on this one?**

RYAN: I dunno. Same as we've been doing?

RILEY: We've played like five games that way. Let's make it interesting.

RYAN: What do you want to bet then?

RILEY: Let me think for a second.

RYAN: You're small blind no matter what. Post up.

RILEY: *(Removes a few chips from his pile and places them in the middle of the table.)* **You too. Big blind.**

RYAN: *(Stops shuffling to add a short stack of chips to the pile RILEY has begun. He sets deck before RILEY, who knocks once on the top of the deck. RYAN picks the cards up again and begins to deal for Texas Hold'Em poker: two cards facedown to each player. RYAN sets deck down between them, and both look at their cards. RYAN looks up at RILEY.)* **So, what's it going to be?**

RILEY: *(Still considering cards)* **How about that pint of Chunky Monkey ice cream you've got in your fridge?**

RYAN: No way, I want to eat that.

RILEY: *(Grins.)* **Don't lose the game then.**

RYAN: Why would I bet with stuff I already own? What do I get if I win this round? The chance to eat my own ice

cream?

RILEY: If I lose, I'll buy you another pint.

RYAN: I don't want another pint of Chunky Monkey.

RILEY: What do you want, then?

RYAN: A pint of Cherry Garcia, I guess.

RILEY: Done. A pint of ice cream is on the table.

RYAN: Don't actually put it on the table. It'll melt.

RILEY: Don't worry. I want my ice cream kept nice and cold until I'm ready to eat it. Which will be after this round.

RYAN: Whatever, dude. I saw your pint of ice cream. Do you want to check?

RILEY: Check.

RYAN: *(Places — "burns" — one card from the top of the deck facedown beside the deck, and then flips the next three consecutive cards — the "flop" — face up between the two players.)* **Good grief! Those are terrible.**

RILEY: Speak for yourself!

RYAN: Would you like to bet another pint of ice cream?

RILEY: I'd like to bet one week of sitting shotgun on the way to school.

RYAN: You're bluffing. You can't possibly have made anything with this junk.

RILEY: Guess you're going to have to call me on it to find out.

RYAN: Call you? I'll raise you a week's worth of the answers to Mr. Vu's math homework.

RILEY: Those assignments are way harder than sitting in the backseat of the carpool!

RYAN: Guess I'm a high roller. Does that mean you fold?

RILEY: No, it means I hope you know what you're getting yourself into. I'll double your bet.

RYAN: Two weeks of math answers?

RILEY: That's right. Too rich for your blood?

RYAN: I'll call.

RILEY: *(Raises an eyebrow.)* **Fine. Let's see the turn.**

RYAN: *(Burns one card face down on top of the first burned card, flips a fourth card face up — the "turn" — and both players glance back at the cards in their hands.)* **Well, that changes things.**

RILEY: Check.

RYAN: That's it? No Spanish homework you'd like to add to the pot?

RILEY: I said check.

RYAN: Well, I'd like to raise you ...

RILEY: What?

RYAN: Never mind. I'll check too.

RILEY: Ha! You've got nothing!

RYAN: You don't know that. I don't have to go all in on the turn.

RILEY: Hey, what is all in anyway?

RYAN: I don't know. This was your idea in the first place.

RILEY: I guess we'll have to wait and see. In the meantime, I'll raise you —

RYAN: You can't raise yet! We just checked. We have to do the river.

RILEY: Well, do the river then. *(RYAN burns one more card and flips a fifth card face-up on the table. RILEY sits back to look at RYAN.)* **Well, how do you like that?** *(RYAN is silent, staring at the card.)* **Shall I go ahead?**

RYAN: You're up.

RILEY: I'd like to bet the keys to your car.

RYAN: What?!

RILEY: You heard me.

RYAN: What do you think you have? Pocket aces? I told you, you can't bet my stuff.

RILEY: Then fold.

RYAN: And lose everything that's already in the pot? I'm not going to do that just because you try to put my car on the table!

RILEY: What do you want if I lose?
RYAN: You can't have my car!
RILEY: What do you want if I lose?
RYAN: This is stupid. Besides, you've got about an eight percent chance of having the cards you're acting like you have.
RILEY: Then you must think you can win. And there must be something you want. *(RYAN glares at RILEY.)* **What do you want if I —**
RYAN: I get to take Rebecca to prom.
RILEY: *(Dumbfounded, then forces a laugh.)* **Yeah, right. I think my girlfriend of two years is off-limits.**
RYAN: Hey. This is a no-limits game.
RILEY: We decided that when we were playing with ten dollars apiece! This is going too far.
RYAN: This is making things interesting. It's what you wanted.
RILEY: Forget it. Forget the car. I'll go buy my own ice cream.
RYAN: Play the game.
RILEY: Besides, it's not like you can gamble away a girl like a piece of property. She's not a car, and she'll never go with you.
RYAN: Maybe not, but I get to ask her. If she says yes, you don't stop her. If she says no, I'll drop it.
RILEY: Your car is worth like a hundred bucks. It's falling apart. That's not really comparable.
RYAN: If you're so sure Rebecca will never look twice at me, then you have nothing to worry about. Apart from my math homework.
RILEY: You're serious about this?
RYAN: Yes.
RILEY: And the car's on the table?
RYAN: That's right. And the homework, and the front seat, and the ice cream. I'm all in.

RILEY: Are you secretly in love with my girlfriend or something? Why do you want to take her to prom?

RYAN: This is poker, not twenty questions.

RILEY: For real though.

RYAN: Are you out or are you in? Look – *(Fishes in his pocket for car keys, and tosses them on the table with the chips.)* **You said you wanted to play for the car.**

RILEY: Yeah, but –

RYAN: Here's your chance.

RILEY: Yeah, but – *(Shakes his head and checks cards one more time.)* **Look, if Rebecca even *hints* at answering "no," you'll leave her alone?**

RYAN: I swear. We'll forget it ever happened.

RILEY: I guess we showdown then.

RYAN: I guess so.

RILEY: On three?

RYAN: *(Takes a deep breath.)* **On three.**

RILEY: And you're sure you want to do this? Winner take all?

RYAN: I'm sure. Ready? *(RILEY nods.)*

RILEY and RYAN: *(Together)* **One ... two ... three.** *(Both flip cards face up on the table, look down at each other's cards, and look slowly back up at each other, eyes wide.)*

8. Dear Sister

Cast: SISTER ONE and SISTER TWO

Setting: Two desks that are across the country from each other.

Props: A stack of blank paper and a pen or pencil for each desk.

(As scene opens, the desks are set up across the stage from each other, facing the audience. SISTER ONE sits Stage Right and SISTER TWO at Stage Left. Both have a stack of blank paper and their pen or pencil in front of them on the desk. Both pantomime writing their lines throughout the duologue. After each sister finishes her part, she folds the "letter" into a paper airplane and sends it soaring across the stage toward the other sister, who is already "writing" her next part. This continues throughout the duologue.)

SISTER ONE: Dear sister, How is boarding school? I see from your pictures that you are pretending to have a good time and make lots of friends. You're not fooling anyone, you know. No school is fun without your dear old favorite sister. On the other hand, Mom and Dad have already forgotten you, and I'm planning to turn your old room into my own personal massage salon, complete with good-looking masseuse. Hope you didn't want any of your furniture, because we are selling it all at a garage sale tomorrow morning. Love, your favorite sister.

SISTER TWO: Dear sister, How is boring old regular school? I see from your pictures that you have helped yourself to everything in my closet. Remember that just because you look like me doesn't mean you are on the same level of coolness. Try to contain your despair. Oh, and don't forget to do all my chores while I'm away. And

clean Humdum's litter box. Love, your bestest sister.

SISTER ONE: Dear sister, Do you have any attractive love interests pestering you at your new school? If you do, give me their mailing addresses, and I will send them the photo of when you dressed up as a truly horrifying clown for Halloween. I guarantee they will not bother you again. Speaking of things dressed up, I have enclosed a photo of Humdum disguised as a ballerina. He really seems to be enjoying himself, and I have him practicing his fouettés to show the trick-or-treaters. Regards from your dearly beloved sister.

SISTER TWO: Dear sister, Please and thank you for not terrorizing my cat! He has mailed me a paw print of distress, and I feel I must speak up on his behalf. Rather than stuffing him into tutus, you should spend your time being jealous of me because I get to go to sunny Myrtle Beach for fall break, and all you get to do is sit inside and make soup. Bummer about rainy Washington. I'll mail you a postcard or a picture of my tan lines if you are lucky. Kind regards from the sister who loves you even though you are oh-so-pale.

SISTER ONE: Dear sister, All the leaves are turning pretty and falling off the trees. All of Dad's hair is turning gray and falling off his head. Just kidding, but Mom did make him let her cut it because she said it looked scruffy. She really screwed up so we had to take him to Great Clips to get it all buzzed off. Now I'm knitting him a hat with that purple yarn you were going to knit leg warmers from before you gave up. Between Dad's new look and my new nose piercing, you will hardly recognize the family! All the best from your faraway sis.

SISTER TWO: Dear sister, I am coming to visit for

Thanksgiving. I bet you thought you were going to borrow my gray winter dress and spill turkey all over it. No can do. Instead, don't forget to plan a big party for my arrival! I would prefer a safari theme but I know you've been putting together a Viking bash in your head since we watched that History Channel documentary three years ago. Either way, I am your eternally tolerant sister, and if need be, I will go shopping for a Viking helmet. Please advise. Best wishes from your sister.

SISTER ONE: Dear sister, Please don't come for Thanksgiving. Your gray winter dress looks so good on me. Besides, we have three inches of snow, which you hate, as you ought to remember from the tobogganing incident. Still, if you do come, bring your best pillaging attire, because I have a party in the works for your arrival night. The theme is a surprise. Everyone's coming. See you soon! Best regards from your infinitely more attractive sister.

SISTER TWO: Dear sister, What do you want for Christmas? How about some nice flannel pajamas or a bow tie or a school year planner? All with my boarding school crest on them, of course, because the school store is the only place I have time to shop before I get home. Be sure to have Humdum freshly brushed with a bow on his collar waiting to greet me. In the meantime, I'm headed out to struggle through an essay on the virtues of turn-of-the-century English literature. Of which there are none. All the best from the sister you get to see in forty-eight hours!

SISTER ONE: Dear sister, I am getting a job as a barista so I can get super rich and buy a house in the south of France. You can probably come visit as long as you don't bring Humdum. Did Mom tell you he got scared by the New Year's fireworks and shredded my

slippers? You owe me a pair. Preferably not with your boarding school crest, like all the other clothes I now own. Love from Mom and Dad's secret favorite.

SISTER TWO: Dear sister, I'm sitting in history class and the substitute teacher is ignoring our upcoming unit test and trying to teach us Russian. He looks a little bit like Uncle Bob except with more teeth. How is barista life? I'm thinking of getting a job at a local cheese shop so I can buy a house bigger than yours. You may come to my garden parties if you promise to behave and not scarf all the macaroons like that one time. Yours truly, sister. P.S. What do you need, a personalized invitation? Come visit me already!

SISTER ONE: Dear sister, Exciting news! Skype me! Love, sister.

SISTER TWO: Dear sister, I know! Mom told me! I can't believe they got us tickets to California! Best birthday present ever. I have written the California tourist bureau to let them know that you are joining me on the trip, and they say you can only come if I keep you on a leash at all times. Don't worry. I'm sure we can find one that matches your bathing suits. Love, your caretaking sister.

SISTER ONE: Dear sister, May I have your nail polish collection? Why, thanks! You are the most generous sister a girl could ask for. This weekend we are taking Dad skiing for his birthday. Oh yes, and Aunt Kath is bringing her triple-chocolate cake with the mocha fudge frosting. I guess I'll be stuck eating your piece. Life here is hard. Sincerely, sister. P.S. Mom says I can come visit you for spring break! Get your party pants on! And I don't mean those eighties stretchy pants that you stole from Mom's donation pile and use to scare away potential new friends.

SISTER TWO: Dear sister, I hope you gain a thousand

pounds from gobbling up my piece of cake. Why don't you be a good sister and offer to mail it to me? You clearly have my address, as evidenced by your repeatedly sending me pictures of my costumed cat. Yesterday my art history teacher told us a story about the architecture at the Louvre, and I thought of the time on vacation there when you tripped and almost knocked over that bust of a philosopher. Naturally, I told all my friends. They can't wait to meet you. Love, your much more graceful sister.

SISTER ONE: Dear sister, Did I leave my really cool new denim vest in your dorm room when I visited? If so, you had better keep it safe and sound for me. I bet you kept it on purpose just so you can sleep with it under your pillow at night, because you already miss me so much. Troll. Best wishes from your sister who got all the good genetics from Mom and Dad.

SISTER TWO: Dear sister, I can neither confirm nor deny that your denim vest is hanging in my closet. I would never dream of touching it, of course. If it were hanging there. Which I can't say that it is. Yesterday I went to a Zumba class thinking I would get in good shape for California's sandy beaches, but today I can't move sans severe pain. Obviously I expect that you will be a good sister and stop working out from now on so that I can continue to be perceived as the more attractive of us. Shouldn't be too hard, as Dad told me you guys are re-watching all ten seasons of *Friends.* Lucky couch potato. Love, your super sore sister.

SISTER ONE: Dear sister, Let the countdown begin! Two weeks to California! I can't believe you have spent almost a whole school year on the East Coast. Humdum has forgotten what you look like, so I have been putting your picture by his cat bed. He seems uninterested. Oh, did I tell you he's coming with us to

California? I'm packing lots of kibbles in my bag for his unending appetite. And for yours. Very best wishes from your sister.

SISTER TWO: Dear sister, Very funny. No one invited Humdum. One week! My dorm room is almost all packed up in boxes to ship home, and my teachers say I haven't failed my finals too badly. Boarding school's been worth a year, but I think it's time for me to come back to regular school with you in the fall. Just to keep you in check, of course. Because I'm caring like that. But first, brush up on your Valley girl phrases and get excited to see me! We are going to have the best time. Love always, sister. *(Both SISTERS stand and exit on their side of the stage.)*

9. Pass the Peas

Cast: PICKY and FOODIE

Setting: A table and two chairs. PICKY and FOODIE sit on the same side.

Props: Foodie carries a clipboard with paper and a pencil.

Costume: Foodie should wear green clothing.

FOODIE: Oh, good. We're having peas for dinner.

PICKY: Gag! Yuck! Not peas again.

FOODIE: Please pass the peas.

PICKY: I hate peas!

FOODIE: I love peas.

PICKY: Peas are little rotten marbles, green and mushy in my mouth.

FOODIE: Peas are little soft pearls, tumbling off my fork.

PICKY: Ick!

FOODIE: Yum!

PICKY: Putrid peas. Poison peas.

FOODIE: Plump peas. Pretty peas.

PICKY: Pesky peas.

FOODIE: Precious peas.

PICKY: Party pooper peas!

FOODIE: Picture perfect peas!

PICKY: Peas are my pet peeve.

FOODIE: Peas are my passion.

PICKY: Peas are appalling.

FOODIE: I'm proud to promote peas.

PICKY: There's a plague of peas on my plate.

FOODIE: There's a preponderance of peas on my plate.

PICKY: I propose that peas be prohibited.

FOODIE: Would you sign my Pea Party petition? *(Offers pen and clipboard.)*

PICKY: Say it isn't so! You've started a political Pea Party?

FOODIE: Our platform is "Eat Peas and Prosper!"

PICKY: Oh, please! With all the potential problems in the world, why waste time and energy on peas?

FOODIE: *(Starts chanting.)* **Plant more peas! Plant more peas!**

PICKY: You are going to be perceived as a pea-brained nutcase.

FOODIE: *(Raises fist in air.)* **Power to the pea-ple!**

PICKY: What do peas have to do with politics?

FOODIE: It is our constitutional right to eat peas at every meal.

PICKY: I don't recall any mention of peas in the Constitution.

FOODIE: It's at the beginning, where it says the Constitution is meant to promote the general welfare.

PICKY: Eating peas does nothing to promote my welfare.

FOODIE: The Pea Party promises to make peas our nation's number one priority.

PICKY: Peas should be purchased by prescription only.

FOODIE: Peas in every pot! Peas or perish!

PICKY: You are a peculiar, pathetic pest.

FOODIE: There's no need to get personal. I'm only proclaiming my priorities.

PICKY: I am perplexed by your persistent preaching about peas.

FOODIE: I am perturbed by your provocative protests.

PICKY: Peas are propagating everywhere.

FOODIE: Yes! A plethora of peas!

PICKY: It's a pea pandemic!

FOODIE: Peas are paradise! I prefer three course meals with peas for every course.

PICKY: I'll skip dinner and just have dessert. Is there any pecan pie?

FOODIE: No. There's a choice of pea parfait or pea pudding.

PICKY: Argh!

FOODIE: *(Holds up two fingers in a peace sign.)* **Peas, brother. Peas!**

10. Parenting on Mt. Olympus

Cast: ZEUS and HERA

Setting: Mt. Olympus. No special set required.

Props: A book and a baby carrier with a baby doll in it for Zeus. Hera wears a watch.

Costumes: Togas are optional for both characters.

(As scene opens, HERA stands Center Stage, tapping her foot impatiently and checking her watch. ZEUS enters with baby carrier and book.)

ZEUS: Hera, honey, I'm home!

HERA: Zeus! There you are! I've been waiting all day for you. Where have you been? Not out chasing other women, I hope.

ZEUS: Of course not, love. Don't worry about me. My brother was acting up in the underworld again. I had to send a message and a few thunderbolts his way.

HERA: What are you carrying?

ZEUS: This is baby Hercules! Alcmene and I have joint custody, and this is the first weekend I get to spend with the tyke. Isn't he precious?

HERA: Zeus! How dare you bring another woman's child into our home! Out with him!

ZEUS: Hera, please keep your voice down. The little angel is sleeping.

HERA: He's no angel. He's half mortal, and he shouldn't even be on Mount Olympus. In fact, he shouldn't have been born at all.

ZEUS: You certainly did your best to prevent it. I can understand why you're angry with me, sweetheart. But my sinning days are over. I want my son to grow up in a happy home.

HERA: He can grow up in a happy home, as long as it's not

ours.

ZEUS: I thought it would appease you to name him Heracles in your honor. It's not my fault the other gods called him Hercules and it stuck.

HERA: I don't care what he's named. I would rather die than play stepmother to that brat. Immortality is such a pain sometimes.

ZEUS: You're going to be a wonderful stepmother. And look, I got us a book on rearing divine children!

HERA: I'm not interested. This is not my job.

ZEUS: *(Sets down baby carrier and reads from cover of book.)* It's called ***From Tots to Titans: Parenting on Mount Olympus.***

HERA: Who publishes this trash?

ZEUS: Hestia wrote it. She's seen as something of an expert in the field, from what I understand.

HERA: If I were goddess of hearth and home, I'd be busy enough without churning out useless handbooks. Does Hestia even have any children?

ZEUS: Well, no. But Leto raised Apollo and Artemis by this book, and they've turned out splendidly.

HERA: I don't want to hear about Leto, or any of your other exes. I hear enough through the grapevine.

ZEUS: Fine, but let's take a look at the book.

HERA: I thought you were going to take me for a chariot ride! I'm the goddess of marriage, not of babysitting. I want to go now.

ZEUS: I let Poseidon borrow the chariot for the afternoon. Wouldn't you rather go at sunset anyway? Let's get the baby settled first.

HERA: Settled! You mean you plan to keep it here too?

ZEUS: Of course! He needs a stable father figure, and I intend to be just that.

HERA: You, stable? Ha! You're king of the gods for your fury, not your family values.

ZEUS: Maybe to the other Olympians, but at home all that's going to change. This is a turning point in my life, Hera. I want to be the best father I can be. And I want you to love my son like he was your own.

HERA: One more wishy-washy word, and I'll walk out this door.

ZEUS: *(Opens book and reads.)* **"Chapter One: Child-Proofing Mt. Olympus."** *(HERA wanders over to where ZEUS has set Hercules' carrier. She peers down at baby in disgust and gives the carrier a contemptuous nudge with her foot.)*

ZEUS: "Prior to arriving home with an infant, new parents should make a thorough inspection of their living space. Things like spare lightning bolts and tridents should be picked up and stowed well out of reach." I can't believe I didn't think of that! Look, there are lightning bolts lying around everywhere. Careless of me! *(ZEUS turns his back on HERA and begins to pantomime picking up lightning bolts and throwing them Off-stage.)*

HERA: You really need to pay more attention to your child's well-being. *(HERA looks to be sure that ZEUS's attention is diverted, and then picks up the baby doll from the carrier and begins swinging it pensively back and forth by its ankle.)*

ZEUS: *(Straightening up)* **That's better. What's next?** *(Reads.)* **"Parents should also be aware of the dangers of Mt. Olympus's altitude. Gods and goddesses have been known to throw one another from the mountaintop in fits of anger and emotion."** *(HERA is now swinging the doll around her head, as if to throw it from the mountain.)*

ZEUS: *(Still not looking)* **Hera!**

HERA: *(Stops and quickly tosses doll back into carrier.)* **Yes, dear?**

ZEUS: Come look at this illustration! Doesn't that look like you throwing someone off the mountain?

HERA: Don't be ridiculous, Zeus.

ZEUS: Just a thought. Where was I? Ah, yes. "If your offspring is part mortal, don't forget that a long fall from Mt. Olympus could mean in a one-way ticket to the underworld. It is best to take precaution against this by procuring a winged horse or dragon. If loyal and properly trained, these creatures can catch your child should they take a tumble from the heights."

HERA: Now there's a good idea! I have a dragon that Hercules could borrow.

ZEUS: The book says it needs to be loyal and well-trained. Your dragon bites everything that moves.

HERA: Exactly.

ZEUS: I think I'll ask Poseidon if he'll let me borrow his Pegasus instead.

HERA: You can't mollycoddle the child through life. Imagine how the other immortal kids will bully him at school! They'll say, "You can't even fend off a silly old dragon."

ZEUS: We can't treat him like a normal immortal. It's hazardous to his health.

HERA: Natural selection is the spice of life.

ZEUS: Moving on to "Chapter Two: Know Your Arch-Enemies."

HERA: Let's skip that section. I can't think of anyone who would harm such a precious little creature.

ZEUS: Sometimes I think Hades is jealous of my heirs.

HERA: I always liked your brother Hades. It's no wonder he's jealous. How would you like to rule the underworld?

ZEUS: I'm not saying I blame him. All the same, I think I'll ask Hermes to double-check any mail he sends. I don't want malevolent baby gifts.

HERA: Speaking of gifts, what happened with that nice pair of snakes I sent Hercules?

ZEUS: Hercules strangled them with his own two fists! He's such a clever little thing. And strong like his papa!

HERA: Strangled them! Those were my prize serpents! Medusa herself bred them for me. They were very valuable.

ZEUS: They were very venomous. You really need to be more mindful of the baby, Hera. Snakes are not a safe gift.

HERA: So sue me. I'm used to shopping for immortals.

ZEUS: Now don't get defensive. It's just something to work on.

HERA: When's the chariot coming back? I'm sick of this book, and your baby is starting to stink.

ZEUS: Oh, I forgot! Do you know how to change diapers?

HERA: There's no way I'm getting near that mess.

ZEUS: I don't know how, either. Maybe I should get Hestia to babysit while we go out. She's a much better caregiver than we are.

HERA: Why don't you go ask her and leave Hercules with me? I'll take good care of the little gemstone.

ZEUS: You just refused to change his diaper! How do I know you'd lift a finger if something went wrong?

HERA: You don't, I guess.

ZEUS: I'll take him with me to Hestia's now.

HERA: Nobody ever trusts me.

ZEUS: I'll be back soon.

HERA: You'd better be baby-free.

ZEUS: Come on Hercules, let's go see Auntie Hestia. *(He picks up carrier and exits. HERA crosses arms and makes a face after them.)*

11. Best Little Town in Montana

Cast: ALEX and KERRY

Setting: A train. Two chairs, side by side, function as train seats.

Props: Two backpacks

(As scene opens, KERRY sits with his backpack at his feet. ALEX enters with the other backpack.)

ALEX: Can I sit here?

KERRY: Sure.

ALEX: Thanks. *(Sits and drops backpack at his feet.)*

KERRY: Yeah. *(Brief pause)* **Where you headed?**

ALEX: Worst place ever.

KERRY: Really?

ALEX: Yeah. My parents sent me the ticket. It's the last place I want to go.

KERRY: That sucks. Where?

ALEX: You've never heard of it. It's the world's tiniest town and it's in the middle of nowhere. No one in their right mind goes to this place.

KERRY: Why not?

ALEX: Because there is literally nothing to do. I mean, I could spend the whole week I'm there sitting around staring at a wall and it would be more exciting than what goes on in town.

KERRY: What are you going for, then?

ALEX: My family reunion.

KERRY: Won't you have fun with your family at least?

ALEX: Yeah, it will be good to see them. But we'll probably be sitting around talking the entire time. I wish we were going somewhere entertaining. I proposed Hawaii, but no. We go to the same place every year.

KERRY: At least you know where you're going. My friend

told me how to get where I'm supposed to be headed, but I kind of forgot.

ALEX: Do you know anything about the place? I might be able to help you; I've ridden this train a million times.

KERRY: Well, I'm headed to a huckleberry festival, but I can't remember the town name. I'd recognize it if I heard it.

ALEX: Mountainside?

KERRY: No.

ALEX: Ketchison?

KERRY: No.

ALEX: Are you meeting anyone there that you can call?

KERRY: I'm meeting my friend there for a random adventure, but his phone's dead.

ALEX: I've never heard of any huckleberry festival around here. What does it involve?

KERRY: I know they've got a pie-eating contest and a rodeo and a Huckleberry Fun Run. From what the website said, they've got a pretty good lineup of bands playing too. Plus, there's a huckleberry jam-making contest with some crazy-cool prizes. Actually, I think the grand prize is a trip for two to Hawaii. I've got a huge jar of jam in my bag. I'm going to enter and hope for the best.

ALEX: You're joking. Sign me up for wherever you're going! Maybe I can skip my reunion and come with you and your friend.

KERRY: If you can't make it this weekend, you should definitely try to go some other time. Apparently the town has the longest glow-in-the-dark mini golf course in the world. And of all things, it's the only town in Montana with a camel sanctuary!

ALEX: Are you sure you're on the right train?

KERRY: I hope so. I've been waiting for this trip for months. We got a reservation at the weirdest hotel,

too. It's built to look like everything in it is upside down! There's a bunch of odd furniture bolted to the ceilings, and the windows are set low in the walls so it looks like the whole building got flipped over.

ALEX: Dang. Maybe if I tell my family about that place, we can go there next year.

KERRY: Or maybe you guys can take a day trip. There's a swimming hole on the river with a giant rope swing over it. I can't wait to take an inner tube down the river. Either that or go whitewater rafting.

ALEX: I bet my family would go for that. I wonder how far of a drive it is from where we're staying. Probably at least an hour. Our cabin is in the absolute boonies. We usually only make it into town for a midweek grocery run. To the most boring grocery store ever.

KERRY: That's too bad. It seems like the rest of Montana has so much going on.

ALEX: Yeah, I guess it does. Maybe someday I'll get to see the good parts of it.

KERRY: Yeah, you don't want to miss that golf course.

ALEX: That sounds amazing. Well hey, this is my stop. It's been fun hearing about your adventure. Have so much fun wherever you're going, OK?

KERRY: Wait, I'm getting off here too.

ALEX: This is your stop? Are you sure?

KERRY: Yeah, I recognize the name now that they said it over the intercom. Troutsville, right?

ALEX: This is the Troutsville stop, but that can't be right. Nothing ever happens in Troutsville.

KERRY: Apparently a huckleberry festival does.

ALEX: And glow-in-the-dark mini golf? You're positive you're not thinking of somewhere else?

KERRY: Positive. There's my friend on the platform!

ALEX: Where?

KERRY: The one with the life vest. Looks like we're going

rafting!

ALEX: I had no idea there was so much to do around here! I'm going to grab my cousins and find that swimming hole you were talking about. This is going to be the best reunion ever.

KERRY: You guys should enter the jam contest too! Maybe you'll win that Hawaiian vacation you wanted.

ALEX: Pfft – Hawaii. I'm staying in Troutsville. This place is awesome!

12. The Alibi

Cast: CARVER and BEN
Setting: Outside a courthouse. No special set required.
Props: None

CARVER: What were you thinking?
BEN: I don't want to talk about it.
CARVER: We have to talk about it. You sat in the courtroom and lied under oath!
BEN: I didn't have any choice.
CARVER: You could have told the truth.
BEN: I told the police the truth the first time they questioned me, and the second time. They didn't believe me. If they had believed me, I wouldn't have been subpoenaed to testify in court today.
CARVER: Just because they wanted to question you again doesn't mean they didn't believe you. You were free to leave. You weren't charged with any crime.
BEN: They had better not charge me, because I didn't commit any crime! Why can't they leave me alone?
CARVER: The way they were leaving me alone until you lied and said you were with me when Rachel was murdered. Now you've dragged me into this mess.
BEN: The reason they kept questioning me was because I didn't have an alibi. I figured if I said I was with you, that would satisfy them and they'd quit bothering me.
CARVER: What about me? Did you stop to think what this does to me?
BEN: I knew you'd back me up. I saw you sitting in the courtroom, and I knew if you heard me testify that I was with you on the night of the murder, you'd say it was true.
CARVER: Why should I commit perjury just to cover up for your lie?

BEN: Because we're friends! You know I'd do the same for you if our positions were reversed.

CARVER: Did it not occur to you that I might prefer not to be involved in this? Rachel and I dated for six months. This murder has not been easy for me, you know.

BEN: It's been worse for me.

CARVER: How could it be worse for you? You had only been dating her for – what? Two weeks?

BEN: That's right. I didn't ask her out until after she broke up with you. I wanted to ask her sooner, but I didn't want to hurt your feelings.

CARVER: My point exactly. I have ten times more memories of Rachel than you have, so it will be ten times as painful for me to be interrogated by the police.

BEN: Maybe they won't bother to talk to you.

CARVER: Are you kidding? When the prime suspect says he spent the night of the murder with me, you know they're going to check me out.

BEN: So you tell them where you were and say I was with you.

CARVER: Where were you when it happened? Why do you need me for an alibi?

BEN: I was in the library. I had my history final the next day, so I was cramming like crazy, trying to make up for all those assignments I never read.

CARVER: Were you with someone?

BEN: I was alone.

CARVER: Someone must have seen you there. Did you talk to anybody?

BEN: No.

CARVER: So you really can't prove you were there?

BEN: If I could prove I was at the library, I wouldn't have had to say I was with you.

CARVER: Since you told them that you were at the library, and now you say you were with me, I'll have to say I was at the library too. Are you positive nobody saw you that night?

BEN: Why are you asking me all these questions? Surely you don't think I had anything to do with Rachel's murder.

CARVER: The boyfriend is always a suspect until proven innocent.

BEN: I thought everyone was innocent until proven guilty.

CARVER: Under the law, yes. In reality, the cops always check out husbands and boyfriends first because the odds are high that they did it.

BEN: What if the victim was a man?

CARVER: Then they question his wife or girlfriend. There's no sexual bias, if that's what you're wondering.

BEN: They need to quit bothering someone who loved her and start trying to track down the person who killed her. They found her body down by the lake. Why aren't they questioning the people who live in that area?

CARVER: Maybe they already did.

BEN: Is that old boathouse still down there? You know, the one where your family used to keep that rowboat?

CARVER: It's still there. So is our boat. I took Rachel fishing in that boat many times. She loved going out on the lake. She used to pack us a picnic lunch, and we'd drift for hours.

BEN: Where were you on the night she was killed?

CARVER: At the library. With you.

BEN: No you weren't. *(Through the next several lines it gradually dawns on BEN that CARVER might be the killer. He is more and more horrified.)*

CARVER: Of course I was. You just testified under oath that we were there together.

BEN: I was lying, and you know it. I never saw you that night.

CARVER: Neither did anyone else. You got lucky when you named me as your alibi because nobody can prove that I wasn't with you at the library.

BEN: Why won't you tell me where you were that night?

CARVER: It's better that you don't know. That way we keep our stories straight. We were at the library together.

BEN: Were you with Rachel? Did you get back together and not want me to find out?

CARVER: We did not get back together.

BEN: You only answered one of my questions.

CARVER: You're very observant.

BEN: You were with her, weren't you?

CARVER: You're guessing.

BEN: You went to the old boathouse together.

CARVER: Let it go, Ben. Nobody saw me that night. Your alibi will hold.

BEN: You were angry because she dumped you, so you lured her to the boathouse.

CARVER: I didn't have to lure her. She loved the boat, and she loved me.

BEN: You killed her, didn't you? You killed Rachel!

CARVER: How could I have killed Rachel? I was at the library with you.

BEN: *(Starts to exit.)* **You won't get away with this. I'm telling the police!**

CARVER: Do that. Change your story again! First you told them you were alone at the library. *(BEN stops and turns back.)* **Then you swore under oath that you were with me. Now go tell them that you weren't really with me, that you lied about it in court. If they didn't have cause to arrest you and charge you before, this**

should give them what they need.

BEN: How could you? Rachel was the sweetest, most beautiful –

CARVER: Most two-timing girl in the world. She vowed she would love me forever. She swore that she'd be loyal and true. We were going to get married in a couple of years.

BEN: No way! She loved me!

CARVER: Then why did she agree to meet me at the boathouse and go for a moonlight ride on the lake?

BEN: You're lying.

CARVER: That makes two of us, doesn't it?

BEN: They'll catch you. You can't prove you were at the library.

CARVER: Of course I can. You testified under oath that I was there. And when the police question me, I'll tell them that you were there too, except for about half an hour between seven-thirty and eight when you left to get a bite to eat. At least that's what you told me you were doing.

BEN: The time of death was between seven-thirty and eight.

CARVER: I know.

BEN: You killed her and you're going to put the blame on me.

CARVER: Thanks for the alibi.

13. North to Alaska

Cast: EDDIE and WILL

Setting: A Seattle tavern, 1898. A table and two chairs are on the stage.

Props: Two mugs

(As scene opens, EDDIE is sitting slouched at the table with a mug. WILL enters from Stage Left with a mug and looks around curiously. EDDIE sees WILL.)

EDDIE: You've come for gold, haven't you, son?

WILL: *(Startled, looks over at EDDIE.)* **How did you know, sir?**

EDDIE: *(Chuckles.)* **I've seen that look before. What's your name, son?**

WILL: William Nordheim, sir. But everyone calls me Will.

EDDIE: *(Extends his hand. WILL shakes it.)* **Pleased to meet you, Will. My name is Edward Gresham. You can call me Eddie. Have a chair. Let's hear your story.**

WILL: *(Sits across table from EDDIE.)* **My story, sir?**

EDDIE: Where you're from, where you've been, how you came to be going where you are.

WILL: I'm not from much, sir. I was born in Sweden but raised in New York City. We immigrated in 1880 when I was a year old. My father makes a humble living as a baker and raised me to follow in his trade. But about a year ago, I saw the first headlines about the miners who struck gold. Sixty-eight rich men arrive on the steamer *Portland!* Pockets and satchels filled with gold! I knew then that my fortune was waiting for me in the Yukon, if only I could get there. I saved every penny I earned to buy a ticket west. I arrived this evening by the Great Northern Railway.

EDDIE: How did you decide to come to Seattle? Why not Portland or Vancouver?

WILL: I saw a full-page newspaper ad in *The New York*

Times. Everyone says Seattle is the Queen City of the Pacific and the gateway to the Klondike.

EDDIE: So they say, but Vancouver or even Victoria would be closer.

WILL: They would?

EDDIE: The Klondike gold fields are in Canada. It's a long trip from here.

WILL: Really? I thought they were quite close.

EDDIE: That's the impression promoters want you to get. The Yukon is nearly two thousand miles to the far North. No one is allowed through Canadian customs without a year's worth of supplies. An outfit won't be cheap.

WILL: I have a little cash with me.

EDDIE: A little can go a long way, but only if you learn to differentiate between important tools and the many gadgets of fictional utility.

WILL: I was going to hire an outfitting agent to get me the best prices.

EDDIE: I strongly recommend that you don't. Most agents out there are looking no further than to make a quick buck. They take top dollar, buy rock-bottom merchandise, and by the time the miner finds out about it, he's hundreds of miles away.

WILL: Where do you suggest I outfit?

EDDIE: Start with the Seattle Woolen Company for blankets and clothes. Nothing's more important than keeping out the cold. You'll need a good tent and stove too.

WILL: I hope I don't get Klondicitis.

EDDIE: What?

WILL: You know, Klondicitis. Gold miners' disease. I've seen lots of advertisements warning about it.

EDDIE: Who publishes them?

WILL: A local doctor's office, I think. Why?

EDDIE: Dr. Lowden, I'll wager. Don't trust a thing he puts out.

WILL: Is he a known liar?

EDDIE: He's a known capitalist. If you've seen adverts for "Yukon bicycles" and "frost extractors," don't waste your money on those either. And don't buy any Aleutian dogs from Barney McGovern. He sold me a pair of lame ones as part of my team.

WILL: You were a miner too?

EDDIE: I was. One of the first to leap onto a vessel bound for the north. It was only a few weeks after the steamer *Portland* docked along the wharf. I saw those miners disembark, laden with gold, before my very eyes. They were like gods. I bought my outfit the next morning. I wasn't alone, either. There were hundreds of men clamoring along the docks, looking for any halfway seaworthy vessel to carry them north. I was one of the lucky ones. An old friend of mine ran a fishing boat north along the coast every month. He took me as far as Victoria, and I caught a ship there more easily.

WILL: What did you find?

EDDIE: I found a vast barren landscape of ice and snow and a footpath north littered with broken equipment and the bodies of sick pack animals. My wagon broke down, and I was forced to abandon much of the equipment that I had spent my own life savings on. Still, I was undeterred. I arrived in the Yukon and spent eleven months slaving away along Rabbit Creek. The gold seemed so close! But by the end of my time there –

WILL: Do you mean you never found any?

EDDIE: Never more than dust. And believe you me, a flake was enough to keep me panning the creek for another month. But in the end, I came home empty-

handed.

WILL: What did you do?

EDDIE: What could I do? Without the money for so much as a train ticket, I sold the last of my salvaged equipment and rented a room at a local boarding house. I found a job selling tents for a man named Helmer. But I realized that the real profits were right here where I started from. Will, if you could only see how this city has changed since I first came through it a year ago! On my return I hardly recognized it for all it's grown. Sailing out of Elliott Bay, I remember looking back on hardly more than a few stumpy buildings erected on swamplands. And now, eight-story structures scrape the sky! People of every ethnicity roam the business district by day and the entertainment district by night. Vice is matched by vigor. More trade comes through Seattle's docks than anywhere else on the coast, excepting perhaps San Francisco. I've never seen New York, but surely even you won't deny that this city is a sight to behold.

WILL: It's true. The *Post-Intelligencer* is calling the rush one of the greatest migrations in the history of the world. A hundred thousand people headed north! And almost all of them coming through Seattle. I'll admit I've never seen a city quite so dynamic and expectant as yours when I stepped off the train today. It's gripping.

EDDIE: Will, listen to me. Your fortune isn't waiting for you in the north. The fortunes to be made from the gold rush are here, at its very doors. Miners come through our metropolis for their outfits and every possible supply they could expect to want. And on the off chance that they come home rich, where's the first place they stop to spend their newfound wealth? Right where they left from. It's unmatched business.

WILL: I know what you're saying makes sense, sir. But with all due respect, my fortune is in gold. I can feel it. It might seem crazy, but I just know it's out there.

EDDIE: That doesn't seem crazy. It sounds familiar. I heard the same call. But mark my words: a year from now you'll be right back in this tavern, wishing you had stayed and made ten times what you'll find in the Klondike.

WILL: I hope I'll be living on the top floor of the Grand Pacific Hotel, a wealthy and respected man.

EDDIE: Then take up a trade. You ought to be my partner, Will. You strike me as a smart young man, and I could use someone like you. I'm looking to start my own business selling tents. Or if tents don't appeal to you, open a restaurant or gambling house or saloon. Sell outfits. Breed sled dogs. The real market is right here, waiting to be mined.

WILL: I appreciate the offer, sir. But I can't turn my back on my destiny. I was born to strike gold.

EDDIE: Then I wish you the best of luck. Look me up when you come back through. My offer for a business partnership still stands.

WILL: *(Stands, and they shake hands.)* **Thank you, sir. Best of luck to you as well.** *(He exits Stage Left.)*

14. When You Walked Out

Cast: ROWAN and MORGAN. ROWAN works best as male, MORGAN as female.
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None

(As scene opens, MORGAN and ROWAN stand Stage Right and Left respectively, facing the audience to recite their letters. Over the course of the duologue, actors may stand still, pace, or turn to face each other depending on personal preference.)

MORGAN: Dear Rowan.

ROWAN: Dear Morgan.

MORGAN: I've wanted to write you for a long time. For about ten years, to be exact.

ROWAN: I got your letter yesterday. After all these years, I couldn't believe my eyes.

MORGAN: One of the old neighbors sent your address to me, but I was afraid to give you back the power to break my heart again. I'm not sure what to say to you, but I've started writing now, and I may as well put everything I've been thinking and feeling for a decade down on paper. I guess I'll decide whether to send this when I get to the end of the page.

ROWAN: I can't tell you how glad I am that you sent it. I'd wished you'd written a hundred times, but of course it's easy to say that now.

MORGAN: Here's what I really need to say: nobody's ever hurt me like you did. When you walked out, you dragged my heart with you over cold, rough ground for miles on end. Or at least that's what it felt like for a long time.

ROWAN: I am so truly sorry for hurting you like that. I never should have walked out in the first place, and when I

realized my mistake, I should have come right back, begging your forgiveness. But I was a coward. And when I finally got up the courage to try to contact you again, you were gone without a trace.

MORGAN: I tried to move on with my life, but our relationship was a big piece to be missing. Still, I leaned on my friends and went back to my old pastimes.

ROWAN: I went up and down our old street, leaving my address with every neighbor, asking them to please, please tell you I was looking for you. I looked on Facebook, but your profile wasn't listed. For years I scanned the newspapers for any mention of your name, but I had no idea where you were until I got your letter. For all I knew you'd gone across the country. You'll never know how many times I've thought about you since I left.

MORGAN: Eventually I got into a routine. I found a new normal, and one day I realized I was happy again.

ROWAN: Even now, ten years after the fact, hardly a day has passed when I haven't seen your face in my mind's eye. But I went back to living on my own, and I pulled my life together. I got a new job, put a deposit on an apartment, made new friends, and kept busy. Everything in my life was coming together.

MORGAN: Happy doesn't necessarily mean complete, though. I recently began to think that no matter how happy my mother was to see you go, maybe I still need you. I didn't know how or in what capacity exactly, but to this day, life feels wrong without you. You don't know how many times I've imagined you calling me up out of the blue one day or calling to me across a city park.

ROWAN: Everything was coming together, that is, except for you. I couldn't find you to tell you I was sorry, and

it was killing me. I had visions of glimpsing you across a crowded street, of calling out to you and seeing your face for the first time in years.

MORGAN: We would approach each other like old friends, then get gelato and catch a bus downtown, retelling the stories of all our favorite adventures. Remember the time we buried treasure at Pirate Creek? Or the time you almost fell in the seal tank at the aquarium?

ROWAN: I thought we would take the day off and see the city sights together, eat junk food for lunch and dinner, and walk along the waterfront. We would play board games and laugh like we used to whenever either of us got bumped home in *Sorry.* I would tell you how beautiful you looked even though you would ignore me.

MORGAN: I kept promising whoever's up there listening that if we had another chance, I would be patient with you and listen when you asked me to do something differently. I was young and naïve back when you left, and I thought I had it all figured out. Turns out, relationships take more compassion and patience than I knew how to give. I know better now, but I can't swallow the feeling that I'm the one who made you leave in the first place.

ROWAN: But Morgan, you could ignore everything else I ever say as long as you hear this: never, ever think that you made me walk out. Leaving you was *my* mistake, and the biggest mistake I've ever made.

MORGAN: No matter whose fault it was, I often wonder what you've been doing. Maybe if you wanted to, we could start over from square one. Please write back.

ROWAN: If you'd like to, could I take you out to lunch sometime? Nothing fancy, maybe grab sandwiches and soda and take them with us to watch the boats. If not, I can understand. There's nothing to account for

my stupidity and a decade of lost time between us. But I'd love to try again from square one. Please write back.

MORGAN: With love, your daughter Morgan.

ROWAN: Love always from your dad, Rowan.

15. Prince Not-So-Charming

Cast: Two females, BETH and SUZIE
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None

SUZIE: I wish I were a princess. I want to be exactly like Cinderella.
BETH: Be careful what you wish for. That whole princess gig isn't all it's cracked up to be.
SUZIE: I get goosebumps when I think about her dancing with the prince at the ball, losing her glass slipper, and having him search the whole country to find the owner. And then, when the slipper fit only Cinderella, he asked her to marry him.
BETH: What a ridiculous reason to get married. Just because she has small feet doesn't mean she's someone you want to spend the rest of your life with. Did he ask her if she wants to have kids? Did he learn if she's a good money manager? What if she has enormous student loans and is crushed with credit card debt and she ends up bankrupting the kingdom?
SUZIE: Where is your sense of romance? The Cinderella story is not about student loans or credit card debt. It's about love!
BETH: Did they discuss getting a pet? What if he's absolutely crazy about cats and she's allergic to animal fur?
SUZIE: He knew from the first second he saw her that she was the only woman for him, and when the glass slipper fit her, he lifted her onto his white horse and they rode off to the palace.
BETH: Right. He didn't give her time to pack, so she arrived at the palace without any of her clothes. She didn't even have a toothbrush.

SUZIE: Her clothes were rags. She wouldn't have wanted to take them. The prince bought her all new beautiful clothes. He probably bought her an electric toothbrush too.

BETH: That's the crux of Cinderella's problem right there. The prince bought her clothes. Would you want some guy picking out all your clothes for you?

SUZIE: Maybe he had catalogs and let her choose. Maybe they shopped online together.

BETH: What if she likes L.L. Bean and he likes Victoria's Secret? That would be a problem.

SUZIE: That's a hypothetical problem that might not even exist.

BETH: What about the king and queen? They exist. Where were they when all of this was going on? Prince Charming is still only a prince, which means the king and queen are in charge. Cinderella not only got dragged off to that palace with none of her own jeans and hoodies, but she had to live with her in-laws.

SUZIE: You don't know that for sure.

BETH: Of course I know it. Where else would the king and queen live besides the royal palace?

SUZIE: Royal palaces are big. Huge! Probably Cinderella and the prince have their own separate living area with dozens of rooms separating them from his parents.

BETH: I certainly hope so. Of course, she still wouldn't have any privacy, what with all the maids and the ladies-in-waiting. Frankly, I don't know how she could stand it. One day nobody paid any attention to the rags she wore to scrub the kitchen or clean out the fireplace, and the next day, she had complete strangers helping her get dressed.

SUZIE: I wouldn't mind having a maid or two at my place. They could start by scrubbing the tile in the shower.

BETH: The maids and ladies-in-waiting are the least of Cinderella's problems. The word from the palace is that once they tied the knot, the prince was less than charming.

SUZIE: What do you mean? What happened?

BETH: Well, for one thing, he insisted on having bacon and fried eggs for breakfast every day.

SUZIE: What's wrong with that?

BETH: Nothing for him. But he started to make Cinderella eat bacon and fried eggs too when she preferred thin, watery gruel. She was used to gruel. She had thin, watery gruel for breakfast every day of her life until she married the prince, and it always helped her keep her girlish figure. If she scarfs down bacon and eggs every morning, she won't be able to fit into her new gowns.

SUZIE: You're right. She'd better watch it, or the glass slippers will be too tight.

BETH: Breakfast is only the beginning of the day's troubles for that girl. I've heard some truly shocking stories, let me tell you.

SUZIE: Don't repeat unfounded rumors. There's no reason to besmirch Prince Charming's reputation.

BETH: They are not unfounded rumors. They came straight from Cinderella's serving wench. I happened to sit next to her at the rally for "Voting Rights for Peasants." But if you don't want to hear the latest news from the castle, I'll keep it to myself.

SUZIE: Well, if it's true, I suppose you can repeat it.

BETH: Far be it from me to spread malicious gossip, even when it does involve Prince Not-So-Charming.

SUZIE: What did he do?

BETH: You're right. There's no reason to besmirch the prince's reputation, especially since none of his loyal subjects would ever guess his secret.

SUZIE: What's his secret? I promise it will be safe with me.
BETH: I'm warning you, you'll be shocked.
SUZIE: Has the prince been cheating on Cinderella?
BETH: Not that I know of, although it wouldn't surprise me if that happens next.
SUZIE: Did he get caught stealing gold from the royal coffers and gambling it away on jousting matches?
BETH: Worse than that.
SUZIE: Worse? What? Tell me!
BETH: The prince doesn't like football.
SUZIE: No! Every red-blooded prince likes football.
BETH: He spent Super Bowl Sunday reading a book.
SUZIE: That's scandalous! How can he lead his kingdom if he doesn't like football?
BETH: Poor Cinderella. She had bet three gold coins in the palace football pool, and she never found out if her numbers won because the prince didn't want the TV on when he was trying to read.
SUZIE: No! If that becomes common knowledge, there could be a feudal uprising.
BETH: I say Cinderella should cut her losses and leave. Take her fancy new clothes and hit the road.
SUZIE: Where would she go? She won't want to return to the cruel stepmother and stepsisters. How would she support herself? Even thin, watery gruel costs money.
BETH: That's easy. She'll write a book!
SUZIE: I don't think Cinderella knows how to write a book.
BETH: That won't matter. She's a celebrity. She'll write an exposé about life in the palace, and the publishers will scramble to buy it.
SUZIE: You mean reveal the prince's secret? That seems like a dirty trick after he rescued her from her miserable life and bought her an electric toothbrush.
BETH: Do you have a better suggestion?

SUZIE: She could stay and co-author a book with Prince Charming. She can convince him that he will save the kingdom if he can get the serfs to read instead of watching football all the time. When they work together on their book, Cinderella and the prince will become true partners, and he'll quit bossing her around and let her buy her own clothes and eat what she wants.

BETH: That just might work.

SUZIE: Imagine being married to a handsome prince and living in a palace *and* being a published author. I wish I were a princess. I want to be exactly like Cinderella.

16. Hitchhikers

Cast: DRIVER and DRIFTER

Setting: Front seat of a car on the highway. Two side-by-side chairs facing audience serve as car seats.

Props: Backpack for Drifter. Frisbee, small hoop, or similar is optional as a steering wheel. Otherwise, Driver may pantomime.

(As scene opens, DRIFTER is standing to one side of the stage with backpack on and thumb up. DRIFTER is looking forward to where DRIVER is sitting in driver's seat, holding steering wheel, and having presumably just coasted to a stop. DRIFTER puts thumb down and jogs over to stop next to passenger-side chair. He bends down to talk to DRIVER as if through a car window.)

DRIFTER: Thanks for stopping, man!

DRIVER: Not a problem. Where you headed?

DRIFTER: Anywhere. Anywhere at all.

DRIVER: West, I presume?

DRIFTER: Works for me.

DRIVER: Hop in.

DRIFTER: *(Pantomimes opening car door and sits down in passenger seat, reclosing door.)* **Thanks again, man. I appreciate it.**

DRIVER: Sure thing. *(Looks over left shoulder as if merging back onto the road.)* **It looks too hot to be standing out there.**

DRIFTER: You're right about that.

DRIVER: Where are you coming from?

DRIFTER: My last stop was in Salina.

DRIVER: So where are you from originally?

DRIFTER: From everywhere. From nowhere. *(Pauses.)* **I'm kidding, I just like the sound of that. I was born in upstate New York.**

DRIVER: You must have grown up there, then.

DRIFTER: That's right.

DRIVER: How long have you been on the road?

DRIFTER: A few weeks. I had to get out of New York. There wasn't anything for me there.

DRIVER: You can't be more than seventeen or eighteen, can you?

DRIFTER: I'm seventeen.

DRIVER: So where have you been since you left home?

DRIFTER: From my hometown I got a ride with a friend's brother as far south as Philly. The brother goes to college there, and I ran around town with him for a few days. Then I caught a ride with a trucker headed to Chicago. I meant to head out of Chicago pretty soon after I got there, but I bumped into an old friend who I hadn't seen in nearly ten years, and I ended up staying with her for about a week. From there I've been bumming rides: Chicago to Indianapolis, Indianapolis to St. Louis ...

DRIVER: And somehow you found yourself in the dead center of Kansas.

DRIFTER: Yep. A girl named Audrey gave me a ride from Lawrence to Salina. Then I got a short ride from the outskirts of Salina to wherever we are now. And now here I am.

DRIVER: Here you are. We're headed out of Hays. Ever seen this part of the country before?

DRIFTER: Nope. I've never been farther than New England.

DRIVER: Don't your parents travel?

DRIFTER: They used to, but now they're homebodies. We live in Oneonta, they've got a summer place in Maine, and between the two, they're content to stay where they are.

DRIVER: It's a beautiful region.

DRIFTER: I know, but I want to see the world. I figured I'd start with the U.S.

DRIVER: I was the same way when I was your age. Do your parents know where you are?

DRIFTER: Well, they don't know I'm in Kansas specifically. I did write my mom a long note explaining what I was doing before I left. She'd be a nervous wreck if I didn't.

DRIVER: She's probably a nervous wreck anyway.

DRIFTER: I promised her I'd call when I got to California. I was even going to call sooner, but I forgot my phone charger at home the night I left. It's been kind of nice, to be honest. Being unreachable, I mean.

DRIVER: Don't you kids have Facebook nowadays? Get on any computer, post a picture, say where you are, and the whole world sees it. My daughters do that. I can't understand how it works, but they're always showing me links from their friends and tagging this and that.

DRIFTER: That's part of the reason I wanted to get out and go where no one knew me. I felt like I knew every little detail about my friends, and they never did anything unexpected. I wanted to be surprised.

DRIVER: Have you been?

DRIFTER: Yeah. I've met some fantastic people. Been taken in and cared for by complete strangers. I've heard some great stories from people who have picked me up on the road, too. But it's harder than I expected to get a ride sometimes.

DRIVER: Times have changed. It used to be that you could get anywhere in the United States in a day or two thumbing rides. Now we're barraged with news stories about kidnappings and assaults because that's what sells papers, and suddenly everyone we see on the street is suspect. I'm not saying there's no reason to be careful, but most people are overly afraid.

DRIFTER: But you picked me up.

DRIVER: What goes around comes around. I thumbed a fair share of rides in my day.

DRIFTER: How far are you driving?

DRIVER: I can take you as far as Pueblo. You'll have to make your way southwest from there.

DRIFTER: That's great. I can do that.

DRIVER: It's funny you should be headed to California.

DRIFTER: Why's that? I want to surf San Diego and see San Francisco. Maybe work on an organic farm. Whatever comes up. I know it sounds stereotypical, but –

DRIVER: It's not that. It's funny because when I was seventeen years old, I left California to hitch my way up to New York.

DRIFTER: No way! Are you kidding?

DRIVER: Nope. I left home with my best friend. I can remember my mother crying on the front lawn, but we jumped in the back of our friend's pickup truck and waved as we drove away.

DRIFTER: Why would you want to go to upstate New York?

DRIVER: For Woodstock.

DRIFTER: You were there? What was it like?

DRIVER: It was the festival of a generation. Everything was happening right there before our eyes, and we really believed that we could change the world. It was muddy and crazy and the music was unreal.

DRIFTER: That's so amazing that you actually lived through that.

DRIVER: That was all the way back in 1969. Sometimes it seems like yesterday.

DRIFTER: What did you do after the festival?

DRIVER: I left New York and traveled, first with my best friend, then with people I met along the way. I took odd jobs and settled down for a few months at a time,

sometimes longer. I lived in Beaufort, North Carolina for almost a year. I had a girlfriend there, and we lived on the beach.

DRIFTER: And then?

DRIVER: The girl and I broke up, and I rode a three-speed bicycle all the way home. That was four years after I first left. I was broke and technically homeless, with a pair of sandals and two T-shirts to my name. I rode into the front yard with hair halfway down my back and the worst sunburn of my life, and my own mother barely recognized me.

DRIFTER: What did she say?

DRIVER: Nothing. She grabbed me by the arm, marched me inside, sat me down at the kitchen table and made me chicken fried steak and the biggest plate of mashed potatoes I've seen in my life. I had three slices of peach pie for dessert, went to bed, and slept for twenty-eight hours straight.

DRIFTER: You lived through one of the best times in history. I wish I'd been there. No one lives like that anymore.

DRIVER: Are you kidding? You're living through a generation where culture, technology, and the world are changing faster than they ever have in the course of human history. No one knows what your legacy will be yet, just like we never knew then what the sixties would come to mean. We still don't fully understand. Your job is to get out there and live your life. You won't find out your legacy until later. Maybe you never will. But you won't make history by wishing you'd been part of something else. *(Looks over at DRIFTER.)* Enough of my rambling, son. You look like you haven't slept in days.

DRIFTER: It has been awhile.

DRIVER: Go ahead and sleep now. It's still five hours until

Pueblo. When we get there I'll take you to the best breakfast place in town and tell you the wildest beaches to surf in San Diego. And you can call your mother to tell her you're alive.

DRIFTER: OK. If you insist.

DRIVER: I insist. From personal experience. Now enough sermons from me. Sleep well, my friend. *(DRIFTER slumps down in seat and closes eyes.)*

17. Goody, Two Shoes

Cast: SHOE ONE (left) and SHOE TWO (right)
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None
Costumes: *Dressing up as shoes, e.g. using string tied as laces, is optional.*

(As scene opens, SHOE ONE sits Stage Left and SHOE TWO sits Stage Right.)

SHOE ONE: Oh, good grief. Where are we going today?

SHOE TWO: I think we're going hiking!

SHOE ONE: Hiking? I hope you heard wrong.

SHOE TWO: You know I'm always right.

SHOE ONE: Tell me you're joking, then. I'm in no shape to go hiking.

SHOE TWO: We're the same size. And you always manage to keep up with me.

SHOE ONE: I don't think you're in any shape to go hiking either. Look at you.

SHOE TWO: What's that supposed to mean? I'm rugged. I'm ready.

SHOE ONE: You're filthy.

SHOE TWO: So? Doesn't affect my hiking.

SHOE ONE: It affects my wanting to be seen with you.

SHOE TWO: Well, you don't have much choice, do you?

SHOE ONE: *(Snorts.)* **No.**

SHOE TWO: That's what I thought.

SHOE ONE: And you're seriously excited about this?

SHOE TWO: It's going to be awesome!

SHOE ONE: We haven't been hiking in ages. We'll start chafing before we make it a mile.

SHOE TWO: No way. A couple feet and we'll fall right back in step.

SHOE ONE: You go. I might hide in the closet.

SHOE TWO: Stop it. I obviously can't go without you. Anyway, someone will find you there.

SHOE ONE: It's worked before. Remember when they wanted to take us camping?

SHOE TWO: Yes. You made me miss the whole weekend.

SHOE ONE: They weren't even going to let us stay in the tent!

SHOE TWO: Probably because you smell.

SHOE ONE: Whoa there. Who smells? You're no midsummer night's rose yourself.

SHOE TWO: *(Sniffs, then shrugs it off.)* We've been lying around here for days. Don't you feel kind of useless?

SHOE ONE: I feel relaxed. You should try it sometime.

SHOE TWO: We're young! We're strong! We should be out roaming the world, not sitting around inside!

SHOE ONE: I'm worn out.

SHOE TWO: Don't act all holey. I've been through as much as you have.

SHOE ONE: I don't want to go.

SHOE TWO: You're sole-less.

SHOE ONE: That's not my fault. It was that dumb backpacking trip that you made me go on –

SHOE TWO: Shhhh, hold your tongue! The counselor's coming. You always rub him the wrong way.

SHOE ONE: All right, fine. I guess I have no choice. Don't get your laces in a knot.

SHOE TWO: *(Ecstatic)* I knew you'd come! And I'll be by your side every step of the way.

SHOE ONE: Here we go again.

SHOE TWO: We're a perfect pair, you and I.

SHOE ONE: Shoo! Stop following me.

18. No Solicitors

Cast: JOHN and BRITNEY
Setting: No special set required.
Props: Two phones

(As scene opens, JOHN and BRITNEY should be standing apart from each other facing the audience and should not acknowledge each other's physical presence. JOHN dials his phone and holds it to his ear.)

BRITNEY: *(Picks up her phone.)* **Hello?**

JOHN: Hello. May I please speak with Miss Coleman?

BRITNEY: This is she. May I ask who's calling?

JOHN: This is John Anderson calling with Hypotenuse Cable Corporation. We're conducting a survey of potential customers, and we're hoping you'll take five minutes to answer a few questions regarding –

BRITNEY: John? *The* John Anderson? John, I can't believe it's really you! Do you remember me?

JOHN: I beg your pardon. I'm not sure I know who this is.

BRITNEY: But you just said my name, John. It's me! Britney Coleman! You must remember me. We went to elementary school together. It *is* you, isn't it?

JOHN: I'm not sure I'm the person you're thinking of ...

BRITNEY: Of course it's you! I'd recognize your voice anywhere. I can't believe you called! How have you been?

JOHN: Well, I'm doing just fine. But are you sure you aren't confusing me with another John Anderson? I can't recall any Britney I attended elementary school with.

BRITNEY: You always were coy, John. I know you know me. We dated for half of second grade.

JOHN: We did?

BRITNEY: Yes. You carved our initials on the maple tree in the middle of the playground.

JOHN: I'm sure I've never done that.
BRITNEY: I watched you. Do you know I went back a year ago to see that tree again? I can still see a faint "J.A. loves B.C."
JOHN: We'll have to agree to disagree. Are you willing to answer a few questions today?
BRITNEY: Sure, but tell me ... what are you doing nowadays?
JOHN: I'm a telemarketer, ma'am.
BRITNEY: Please, call me Britney. I never thought I'd hear you say my name again. Are you back in the area?
JOHN: I'm not at liberty to discuss my physical location.
BRITNEY: Still playing hard to get, I see. Just like when you moved away. You broke my heart. Did you know that, John? You really broke my heart.
JOHN: I've only got three questions for you. Shall I go ahead?
BRITNEY: Why ask? You know I'd do anything for you.
JOHN: Question One: Are you satisfied with your current cable service?
BRITNEY: Here I am getting ahead of myself. I half thought you were going to ask me to dinner, even after all these years. No, I'm actually not satisfied with my cable service. It's outrageously expensive. I dread getting the bills every month.
JOHN: Would you consider switching cable companies today if you were offered a competitive rate?
BRITNEY: Yes, I guess I would consider it.
JOHN: What would you say to an all-inclusive rate of forty dollars per month?
BRITNEY: Forty a month! John! You don't have to do that for me.
JOHN: I'm just doing my job, ma'am. We can have a new dish installed tomorrow morning.
BRITNEY: You are truly the sweetest. Are you sure it

wouldn't be too much trouble?

JOHN: It's no trouble at all. Shall I sign you up?

BRITNEY: Oh, yes! That would be amazing.

JOHN: Wonderful. May I please have your current address?

BRITNEY: It's 721 Valencia Street. Maybe now you can send me all those love letters you promised me when you left.

JOHN: That's highly unlikely. But I will send someone over to install your new cable dish first thing tomorrow. You'll be able to take care of all the necessary paperwork then.

BRITNEY: Are you sure you can't come yourself?

JOHN: Unfortunately, I'm not involved in the installation process.

BRITNEY: That's a shame. But you'll call me again, won't you?

JOHN: You'll receive periodic calls from us. Is this the best number to reach you at?

BRITNEY: Yes, it is.

JOHN: That's great. We'll call back in six months to ensure your complete satisfaction with our service. Our customers are very important to us.

BRITNEY: Six months! Well, I'll be counting the days. I knew I was still important to you.

JOHN: You can also reach us online or by using the phone number listed on our website.

BRITNEY: Is that the best way to contact you?

JOHN: No, that number will send you to our electronic service center.

BRITNEY: I guess I'll just have to wait to hear from you again. Don't make me wait too long, John.

JOHN: Do you have any questions for me?

BRITNEY: Just one question, John. Do you believe in fate? Because I do. And this is proof that fate exists. I'm so

glad you called.

JOHN: So am I! Thank you for signing up with Hypotenuse Cable, and have a great day!

19. Cutesy-Wutesy Doggie-Woggie

Cast: DORA and SYLVIA
Setting: A street corner
Props: Stuffed dog and blanket for Dora. Sylvia wears a watch.

(As scene opens, SYLVIA is pacing and looking at her watch. DORA enters, carrying a blanket and a stuffed dog.)

DORA: Hi! Sorry I'm a few minutes late. I had to wait for Foo-Foo to go potty.

SYLVIA: I thought we were going to a movie.

DORA: We are. That's why we're here, right? We were supposed to meet and go together.

SYLVIA: What about your dog?

DORA: This is Foo-Foo. Isn't she the most adorable thing you've ever seen? *(Nuzzles the dog.)* **Say hello to Auntie Sylvia, Foo-Foo.**

SYLVIA: What are you going to do with Foo-Foo while we're in the theater? It's too hot to leave her in the car.

DORA: She'll go with us. *(To stuffed dog, in baby talk)* **Foo-Foo loves movies, don't you, sweetums?** *(Back to Sylvia)* **Her favorite is *101 Dalmatians*.**

SYLVIA: Are you sure they allow dogs in the theater? Most places like that don't, unless it's a service dog.

DORA: Why would anyone object to Foo-Foo going to a movie?

SYLVIA: Some people are allergic to animal fur and can't be in the same room with a dog or cat. Also, the theater manager might worry about cleanliness.

DORA: Foo-Foo is clean. She had a bath yesterday in lilac-scented doggie shampoo. Smell her! *(Holds dog toward SYLVIA.)*

SYLVIA: No, thanks. I believe you. There's also a liability

issue. What if Foo-Foo bites someone?

DORA: Are you kidding? Foo-Foo wouldn't bite anybody. She is the sweetest, most good-natured dog ever. Don't you like dogs?

SYLVIA: I like dogs. I have a dog of my own, Beastie. He's part collie and part German shepherd.

DORA: Ooooh, we should plan a play date for Foo-Foo and Beastie. We could meet at the dog park and let them run around together.

SYLVIA: Beastie is a lot bigger than Foo-Foo. Wouldn't Foo-Foo be intimidated?

DORA: No way. Foo-Foo is small, but she's feisty. Last week she attacked a Great Dane that tried to jump on me. The dog was being friendly, but Foo-Foo didn't know that.

SYLVIA: What happened?

DORA: The Great Dane's person intervened. He actually yelled at me to call my dog off. Then he started in about obeying the leash laws. As if I would ever put Foo-Foo on a leash. Leashes are demeaning. How would you like to have a strap hooked on to your collar and be dragged around whether you wanted to go or not?

SYLVIA: I wouldn't like it, but I'm not a dog. And I don't attack Great Danes.

DORA: Are you saying you think leashes are a good idea?

SYLVIA: If the dog is out in public, then yes, I think it should either be leashed or completely under control.

DORA: Foo-Foo was not out of control. She was simply defending her person. *(To dog)* Weren't you, my cutesy-wutesy doggie-woggie?

SYLVIA: Why do you have that blanket? It's eighty degrees out.

DORA: The theater might be air-conditioned.

SYLVIA: I hope it is.
DORA: Sometimes air conditioning is too cold for Foo-Foo, so I carry a blanket to wrap her in. *(To dog, in baby talk)* **I wouldn't want my snooky-wooky to catch a nasty old coldy-woldy.**
SYLVIA: *(Copying DORA's babyish tone)* **She might sneezey-weezy some snotty-wotty.**
DORA: Oh, look! She's wagging her tail at you. She likes it when you talk baby talk to her.
SYLVIA: So you plan to hold your dog through the whole movie?
DORA: If there's an empty seat beside me, I might let Foo-Foo sit in her own space.
SYLVIA: What if she barks?
DORA: Why would she bark?
SYLVIA: Maybe she'll get excited if there's some loud action, or maybe there's a dog in the movie and she'll see it or hear it.
DORA: Foo-Foo understands the difference between a real dog and a pretend dog.
SYLVIA: *(Barks loudly at stuffed dog.)* **Woof! Woof, woof, woof!** *(They both stare at the stuffed dog.)*
DORA: As you can see, Foo-Foo is not excitable.
SYLVIA: Well, if we're going to be there in time for the main feature, we'd better get started.
DORA: I have to make one quick stop on the way to buy a doggie snack for Foo-Foo. She needs to eat every two hours or she gets cranky.
SYLVIA: You plan to feed her during the movie?
DORA: Just a few peanut butter crackers or maybe some chicken jerky.
SYLVIA: Can't she eat popcorn? You can get that at the theatre.
DORA: It's too salty. I'm very fussy about Foo-Foo's diet. *(To dog, in baby talk)* **We wouldn't want our doggie-**

woggie to get an upset tummy-wummy, would we?

SYLVIA: *(Exasperated)* Heaven forbid. She might pukey-yukey on the seaty-weaty.

DORA: Never.

SYLVIA: Let's go. ***Attack of the Killer Strawberries*** starts in twenty minutes.

DORA: I thought we were going to see ***Dogs Rule: The Sequel.***

SYLVIA: No way. I saw the original ***Dogs Rule*** and could barely stay awake. I left partway through.

DORA: ***Attack of the Killer Strawberries*** will be too scary for Foo-Foo.

SYLVIA: It's an animated film. It's rated G.

DORA: I'm sorry, but I'm very fussy when it comes to Foo-Foo's movies.

SYLVIA: And I'm fussy when it comes to my movies. I'm not paying money to watch ***Dogs Rule: The Sequel.***

DORA: I guess we aren't going to a movie then.

SYLVIA: I'm still going.

DORA: You'd go without me? After we had agreed to see a movie together?

SYLVIA: You can come.

DORA: No. It's more important to be a responsible parent than it is to have a couple of hours of entertainment. *(To dog, in baby talk)* Isn't it, lovey-dovey?

SYLVIA: Maybe we can go to a movie some other day.

DORA: *(Walks off baby-talking to dog.)* It's OK, sweetsie-poo. I'll still buy some treats for you. You're my cutesy-wutesy dumpling-wumpling.

SYLVIA: I think I'm going to be sicky-wicky. *(Exits opposite direction.)*

20. The Ballad of Lewis and Clark

Cast: LEWIS and CLARK
Setting: The untamed Pacific Northwest, 1805.
Props: None
Costumes: Both should wear furs, large backpacks, and any other primitive outdoor gear.

(As scene opens, LEWIS and CLARK are trudging wearily in place, facing the audience. This continues throughout the duologue.)

LEWIS: *(Groans.)* **Clark. This is exhausting. Are we there yet?**

CLARK: Don't ask me. You think I know how to read a map? Sacagawea's the only one keeping us from being completely lost in the wilderness.

LEWIS: You can't read a map? How did you even get to come on this expedition?

CLARK: You nominated me.

LEWIS: Oh. Well, I thought you knew cartography.

CLARK: What does it matter? We'll never reach the Pacific Ocean. I'm starting to think it isn't out there.

LEWIS: Of course it is. Jefferson knows. He has the world's largest collection of Northwest geography materials.

CLARK: So why didn't he take this trip himself?

LEWIS: He's busy being president, or so he says. Honestly, though, how hard can that be? All I see him doing is lounging around talking politics with James Madison. His job is definitely not as tough as our trek.

CLARK: I just wish we had some way to distract ourselves. Every time I see another Douglas fir tree, I want to shoot myself in the foot.

LEWIS: I concur! These mountains are killing me. Why didn't LePage's account of the transcontinental voyage say anything about them? They're gargantuan! Twelve

thousand feet, I'd wager. I thought we'd be able to carry our boats to the Columbia no problem.

CLARK: Instead, we can barely carry ourselves, and I'm sweating through my deerskin pants.

LEWIS: Do you know any marching songs?

CLARK: Nah. And anyway, I can't sing.

LEWIS: What about rhymes?

CLARK: What do you mean, rhymes?

LEWIS: You know, poem-type things that could go along with a beat, such as the rhythm of our footsteps.

CLARK: I can't say I know any of those, either.

LEWIS: Clarky, we should make one up.

CLARK: Meriwether, you have the strangest ideas.

LEWIS: Clark! As your captain, I command you to humor me. I can't listen to myself think anymore because all I think about is strangling Jefferson for sending us on this abominable misadventure.

CLARK: All right, captain, we can try to make up a rhyme. How do we go about it?

LEWIS: Firstly, we've got to step in time. *(LEWIS and CLARK begin stepping to the same deliberate beat.)*

CLARK: Left ... left ... left, right, left ...

LEWIS: OK, I'll start. "It's Captain Meriwether Lewis and Captain William Clark ... "

CLARK: Go on. Lots of things rhyme with my name.

LEWIS: Um. "We're trekking in the daylight 'cause we'd get lost in the dark."

CLARK: Good one, captain!

LEWIS: Thank you, Clarky. And now it's your turn.

CLARK: Me, sir?

LEWIS: Yes, Clarky.

CLARK: OK, let me think ... How about, "The Oregon country is hotly disputed.

It's not our property yet, so we might well get looted."

LEWIS: You're a natural!

CLARK: You try it again. *(From here on out LEWIS and CLARK rap their lines in time with their march. They get progressively more enthusiastic with each delivery.)*
LEWIS: "The Corps of Discovery is certainly the best.
We're roaming in the untamed Pacific Northwest."
CLARK: "There are thirty-three of us, and we left from Camp Dubois.
The winter wind was nasty and our noses red and raw."
LEWIS: "The first one to desert the corps was Mr. Moses Reed.
He told us he forgot his knife but fled with shocking speed."
CLARK: "Then Sergeant Charles Floyd got acute appendicitis.
He died, but we won't miss him, 'cause he tended to deride us."
LEWIS: "Private Field was first to kill a bison with a gun."
CLARK: "Then we sent a prairie dog to Jefferson for fun."
LEWIS: "The Spaniards heard about us, and they tried to intercept us ... "
CLARK: "But we are movin' faster, and we think they'll never catch us."
LEWIS: "By now we're rocking fox furs and coonskin caps ... "
CLARK: "We're stepping in time as we're making up raps."
LEWIS: "We need to find a water route direct to the Pacific,
So we can trade materials and make the states terrific."
CLARK: "Thomas Jefferson gave us lots of books to carry.
They're useful but they're heavy, and they make the West sound scary."
LEWIS: "If we're being honest, he gave us too much stuff."
CLARK: "On the bright side, when we get back we'll be

buff."
LEWIS: "Those solid silver Peace Medals were really not light.
We left them all behind, even though they're pretty tight."
CLARK: "The American Philosophical Society
Is giving us our funding, quelling much of our anxiety."
LEWIS: "But still we feel unprepared 'cause we don't have good maps ... "
CLARK: "We're afraid that this will cause unfortunate mishaps."
LEWIS: "I shot a big bison by myself the other day,
But then a bear got angry, and she chased me far away."
CLARK: "We made a good friend when we met Sacagawea.
She helped us when we showed some early signs of giardia."
LEWIS: "On the other hand, then she had to go and have a son.
Now he cries a whole lot, and it isn't any fun."
CLARK: "We might leave her behind if she weren't translating,
But her skills are pretty useful, so we really can't be hating."
LEWIS: "Helpful as she is, though, this journey's never-ending.
On and on and on we go, upwardly ascending."
CLARK: "We've learned about the plants and animals across the region.
We're writing more essays than your average collegian."
LEWIS: "We've established good relations with at least two dozen tribes.
We're spreading U.S. influence and power

nationwide."
CLARK: "We didn't have the best of luck meeting with the Sioux.
There was very nearly fighting, and we weren't sure what to do."
LEWIS: "The Mandan were nice to us and kept us from starvation.
We smoked the peace pipe with them, to their appreciation."
CLARK: "Once we cross the Continental Divide, we'll make history.
Our names will be in textbooks, and our feet will be all blistery."
LEWIS: "But at the moment, we're still scaling this humungous peak.
There isn't enough food for us, and we are getting weak."
CLARK: "If we ever make it over this infernal hill,
They ought to put our faces on a ten-dollar bill.
In the meantime, Meriwether, just pretend we're famous."
LEWIS: "Clark, I hope we are someday – and really, who can blame us?"
CLARK: "If we don't make it as explorers, maybe we'll be rappers."
LEWIS: "It seems at least as lucrative as working as fur trappers!" *(LEWIS and CLARK nod in agreement. They continue nodding to the beat as they march off the stage.)*

21. Yard Sale Treasures

Cast: HARLEY and PEYTON
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None

(HARLEY and PEYTON stroll onto the stage together.)

HARLEY: *(Points.)* **Wow! Look at all this stuff! Mom is really ready for her yard sale.**

PEYTON: I guess she was serious about getting the whole house organized.

HARLEY: Once the sale is finished, we might even be able to get the car in the garage again.

PEYTON: Did you clean out your room yourself, or did she help you?

HARLEY: I meant to, but I got busy with other stuff and Mom ended up doing it for me.

PEYTON: Me too. I feel kind of guilty because she asked me a zillion times to sort through my things and set aside stuff I don't need anymore, but I never got around to doing it. She must have done it while I was at play rehearsal.

HARLEY: There are so many things for sale out here that I wonder what's left in the house.

PEYTON: I don't see any furniture, so I guess we still have beds and a couch.

HARLEY: Wait a minute! *(Pretends to pick up an item.)* **This is the ceramic paperweight I made in second grade.**

PEYTON: That ugly blob is a paperweight? I always wondered what it was.

HARLEY: Ugly blob! This is not a blob. It's a work of art! I painted it by hand.

PEYTON: *(Pretends to look at the paperweight.)* **Apparently you were in a black and purple phase. I'm glad you only painted a paperweight and not your bedroom.**

HARLEY: Mom can't sell this valuable paperweight!
PEYTON: Valuable? You're kidding, right?
HARLEY: It's loaded with sentimental value.
PEYTON: When did you last use it?
HARLEY: I don't know. I haven't seen it in years. I had totally forgotten about it.
PEYTON: If you forgot about it for years, you won't miss it.
HARLEY: I want to save it. Someday I'll pass it on to my son.
PEYTON: If you ever have a son, he'll make his own awful second-grade projects.
HARLEY: You don't recognize quality when you see it.
PEYTON: Oh, no! Look! *(Points.)* **That's my Cinderella costume from fourth grade when I won the Halloween costume contest.** *(Pantomimes holding up costume.)* **Mom must have put this out here by mistake.**
HARLEY: I hate to be the one to break it to you, but you no longer fit into that Cinderella costume. There's not much point in keeping it if you can't wear it.
PEYTON: That costume contest was so great! Lila May Snobface bragged for weeks about her Spider Woman outfit and how she was sure to win first prize, which was a ten-dollar certificate for the ice-cream store. She asked me what my costume was, and when I told her I was going to be Cinderella, she laughed and said Cinderella costumes were for kindergarten babies. After I won the contest, she got so mad she stomped out of class and went to the bathroom and bawled.
HARLEY: And you, being the kind-hearted and empathetic person that you are, went after her and consoled her and told her you would share the prize with her?
PEYTON: Are you kidding? I laughed myself silly. Then I went into the bathroom with Vicki, and while Lila May hid in a stall, Vicki and I discussed which flavors

of ice cream we were going to get with my prize.

HARLEY: No wonder you want to keep the costume since it brings back such loving and tender memories.

PEYTON: Hey, Lila May was the biggest bully in the whole school. She made my life miserable for years, and that contest was the only time I ever got the better of her. Maybe it wasn't my finest moment, but she had it coming.

HARLEY: Oh, no. This is going too far! *(HARLEY points.)* Mom plans to sell the Kitty Hawk model that I made.

PEYTON: No, she doesn't.

HARLEY: Yes, she does. It's right there in that box.

PEYTON: That's the "free" box.

HARLEY: What? She's giving away my Kitty Hawk model?

PEYTON: She can't sell it. It only has one wing.

HARLEY: It had two when I built it.

PEYTON: What else is in that "free" box?

HARLEY: Some stained T-shirts, a Barbie doll with no hair, and some other junk.

PEYTON: My Barbie's in there? I am *not* getting rid of Barbie.

HARLEY: Seriously? You still want to play with Barbie?

PEYTON: Of course not, but Barbie was my friend. If I'm not going to keep her, I should dispose of her in a respectful way, not toss her in a "free" box.

HARLEY: You could have a funeral and bury her in the backyard. Put some flowers on her grave.

PEYTON: That might be going a little too far.

HARLEY: What happened to her hair?

PEYTON: I shaved it off. I got in big trouble for wrecking Dad's electric razor.

HARLEY: I have a brilliant idea. I'm going to buy your Cinderella costume and take your free Barbie.

PEYTON: What?

HARLEY: And you are going to buy my paperweight and

take the free Kitty Hawk model.

PEYTON: I don't want your paperweight or your model.

HARLEY: I don't want a Cinderella costume and a Barbie either. But I do want great gifts to give you for Christmas. I never know what to buy, and I never have any money for presents.

PEYTON: You are a certified genius! We'll have perfect Christmas gifts for each other, and we each only have to spend twenty-five cents! *(HARLEY and PEYTON high-five.)*

HARLEY and PEYTON: *(Together)* **What a great yard sale!**

22. The Choice

Cast: KELLY and TAYLOR
Setting: No special set required. One chair is on the stage.
Props: Notebook and pen for Taylor

(As scene opens, KELLY is standing and pacing. This continues throughout. TAYLOR enters.)

KELLY: *(Agitated)* **Thank goodness you're finally here! Will you help me make a pros and cons list? I'm freaking out right now. I have to send in my college acceptance letter by tomorrow.**

TAYLOR: Whoa! Deep breath, OK? I can definitely try. Do you want me to write the list? *(KELLY nods frenetically.)*

TAYLOR: *(Sits and opens notebook.)* **OK. Try to relax, Kelly. Let's start at the beginning. What are the schools again? The U and ...**

KELLY: Lodine College.

TAYLOR: *(Writes.)* **OK. Where is that?**

KELLY: Way out in the middle of nowhere. It's some tiny rural town about an eight-hour drive from here. There's seriously nothing near it. I had to look it up on the map.

TAYLOR: OK, so that's one con. Do you think you could spend the next four years there?

KELLY: I don't know! I've never lived outside of a city. At first I thought it sounded horrible. They say that being in a small town means there's always something fun happening on campus, though, because there's nowhere else to go. Plus, it'd be easier to focus on studying. So maybe it's a pro. How am I supposed to know?

TAYLOR: Studying! Yeah, right. Those good intentions always disappear the first week of school.

KELLY: *(Shrugs.)* **I know. The classes at Lodine actually look**

interesting, though. There's one called "Sociology of Hipsters." Isn't it crazy what we can study in college?

TAYLOR: No way! Are you going to take it?

KELLY: No idea. I still don't even know what I want to major in! I swear everyone in our class except me has their entire career path figured out. How am I supposed to know what I want to do for the rest of my life?

TAYLOR: For one thing, not everyone has their careers figured out. I still don't know what I'm going to study.

KELLY: You're so good at science, though. You'll do cancer research or chemical engineering or something. I have no applicable skills.

TAYLOR: That's the whole point of going to college! If you already knew how to change the world, we wouldn't be having this conversation. Anyway, you can always double major if you can't pick just one.

KELLY: That's true.

TAYLOR: Is there a school you're leaning towards?

KELLY: I guess I always assumed I'd go to the U. I know the area so well, and my entire family went there. We've had season tickets to the football games since before I was born. My parents and sisters bleed blue and gold. I'd be the only one not to go there if I chose Lodine. They might disown me.

TAYLOR: That's very true. Plus, a lot of your friends will be at the U. That's a pro too. *(Starts to write.)*

KELLY: Is it, though? What if I never meet any new people because of it? I've already spent eighteen years in the same place. What if I get stuck here?

TAYLOR: Well, you're going to college to have more opportunities in the future. What're four more years around here? If you get tired of this place by graduation, you can pick up and move anywhere you like.

KELLY: Look at last year's class, though. All the cliques from high school moved on to college together, and their lives haven't changed a bit. And the kids who have already graduated from there got jobs right back in town. College is supposed to be a clean slate, you know?

TAYLOR: Do you know anyone going to Lodine?

KELLY: Not a single person.

TAYLOR: Should I put that under pros or cons?

KELLY: I don't know. I could be anyone I wanted ...

TAYLOR: A pro then.

KELLY: But what if I don't make any friends? Lodine is tiny. Like, smaller than our high school.

TAYLOR: Seriously? Is there anything to do on campus?

KELLY: There's so much! I looked on the website and they've got about a hundred clubs. It might be too much. I have no idea how I'd juggle all the things I'd want to join.

TAYLOR: *(Writing that down)* **What about sports? Do they have good teams?**

KELLY: No teams to watch and cheer for on TV, if that's what you mean. Their teams are mostly walk-ons because Division Three schools aren't allowed to give sports scholarships.

TAYLOR: They're not? But what about soccer? You've got a scholarship offer from the U, haven't you? And you're considering a school that can't even match that?

KELLY: *(Guiltily)* **I might not want to play soccer next year.**

TAYLOR: Not play soccer? But you're our top scorer! You could play anywhere you wanted. I know people who would give anything to be able to play like you.

KELLY: I met with the coach at the University. They practice six days a week for four hours a day. And there are two-a-days every day of spring break. How would I have time to be a normal college student?

TAYLOR: I can't imagine you not playing soccer.

KELLY: To tell you the truth, neither can I. But I am kind of ready for a break. I was looking at Lodine's page on intramural sports and I started thinking about it. I could still play intramural soccer, and it would be strictly for fun. And I might try Ultimate Frisbee!

TAYLOR: Backtrack for a second. Is this Lodine place expensive?

KELLY: Um, yeah. Actually, it's really expensive. But they do have some financial aid.

TAYLOR: You should probably stop and ask yourself how much you're willing to rack up in student loans over the next four years. Your parents aren't paying for this, are they?

KELLY: No, they're not. I'll have to get an on-campus job to offset the cost of tuition. Even then, I'll be paying bills long after I graduate.

TAYLOR: Big con. The U would be so much cheaper. You can even come home on the weekends to do your laundry.

KELLY: If I did that, how would I learn to live on my own? Isn't that what college is supposed to teach you more than anything? If I could come home on the weekends and see all my old friends and do the same things I've always done living here, how would I learn anything new about myself?

TAYLOR: *(Closing the notebook)* **Listen, Kelly. Forget this list. It's all scribbly and full of arrows anyway. You're going to have a fantastic time no matter where you choose. You know that, right?** *(KELLY nods, lost in thought.)* **It seems like you might have an idea of what you really want to do, though. Am I right about that?** *(KELLY nods again, slowly.)* **That's what I thought.**

KELLY: I think I know what I'm going to do.

TAYLOR: I think I know too.

KELLY: You're the best, Taylor. Want to come with me to the post office? I need to go mail that letter! *(TAYLOR stands, and they exit enthusiastically.)*

23. Runaway Slave

Cast: SLAVE and FARMER. If Farmer is female, change "sir" to "ma'am" in Slave's speeches.

Setting: Farmer's home, 1861. A small table and plain chair are Center Stage.

Props: A glass of water and a piece of bread wrapped in cloth are on the table.

Costumes: Slave's clothing is ragged and he/she is barefoot.

(As scene opens, FARMER is standing Stage Right. SLAVE enters Stage Left and stops after a few paces. He crouches as if ready to run, then knocks on the floor. Farmer walks toward SLAVE, stops a few feet in front of SLAVE, and pretends to open a door.)

FARMER: You're a runaway?

SLAVE: Yes, sir.

FARMER: Welcome. Come in. *(SLAVE hesitates, looking around as if fearful that this is a trap.)* **Hurry now, before you're seen.** *(SLAVE steps forward. FARMER "closes" door.)* **You'll be in this room. It's dark because there are no windows, but you'll be safe here. There's water for you, and bread.**

SLAVE: *(Takes a drink.)* **Thank you.** *(Sits wearily in chair.)*

FARMER: You're young to be traveling the Underground Railroad by yourself.

SLAVE: My mam and pap were with me when we left, but the soldiers caught them. I saw them ride up in their gray clothes and bright brass buttons. Pap heard the horses' hooves coming and told me to hide.

FARMER: Where did you hide?

SLAVE: There was an old clay pit dug into a high bank. That's where we got clay to mix with hog hair to make chinking for log houses. That's what Pap and the other men built for the master. I ran and hid way back in that

old clay pit. I heard the soldiers shouting, and I knew they'd caught Mam and Pap. I never came out 'til it was dark. By then the soldiers were gone, and so were my mam and pap.

FARMER: Do you want to tell me about your mam and pap? Sometimes it's less lonely if you talk about those you love.

SLAVE: My mam, she's a seamstress. She has a spinning wheel and a loom. She makes the cotton cloth for all the slaves' clothes. Mam's cloth is mighty fine.

FARMER: What about your pap?

SLAVE: Pap plants cotton and hoes cotton and picks cotton. Dem cotton baskets weigh seventy-five or a hundred pounds, but my pap, he lifts 'em right up. He says a slave is the same as a mule to de master, 'cept mules sometimes get fed good, and we slaves is half-starved.

FARMER: The bread is for you. I'll give you food to take with you when you leave, too.

SLAVE: I thank you. *(Nibbles on bread.)*

FARMER: Did you work too?

SLAVE: Oh yes, sir, I been workin' since I was six years old. I tote wood and feed the hogs and do odd jobs.

FARMER: Do you have sisters and brothers?

SLAVE: I gots one brother, but I don't know where he is. He's older than me, a big husky boy. Master sold him for four hundred dollars, and he got took away to Alabama. 'Fore he left, he told me to go north first chance I got. He said people in the north don't have slaves. He said he was goin' to run north too, and maybe we would find each other someday.

FARMER: I hope you do.

SLAVE: His name is Thomas. If a Thomas stops here one day, and he's a big husky boy, you tell him I went north looking for him.

FARMER: I'll do that.
SLAVE: My name is –
FARMER: No! Don't tell me your name. If the vigilantes come looking for you, I want to be able to say I never knew anyone with that name.
SLAVE: Are you a church-goin' person? You seem to have a good heart. My mam took me to the Baptist church every Sunday and told me if I was goin' to be a good person, I needed to walk with the Lord.
FARMER: What about your pap?
SLAVE: Pap said he'd go to church when he could sit wherever he wanted, 'stead of all the slaves on one side and all the white folk on the other. Said when the Lord let him read God's word in the Bible for himself, he'd start to pay attention.
FARMER: Smart man, your pap.
SLAVE: Mam said for Pap to keep his ideas to hisself or he'd get a whipping. Pap said he'd walk with the Lord when the Lord decided to let him walk anywhere he chose.
FARMER: After you left the clay pit and were all by yourself, how did you know to come here?
SLAVE: 'Fore we left home, Pap showed me a map.
FARMER: Do you know how to read?
SLAVE: Oh no, sir. We wasn't allowed to have lessons. If you was caught doin' learning, you was whipped. The master once saw Mam peeking at the preacher's Bible, and he was mad as a hive of bees. Told her books warn't meant for her kind. He didn't whip her, though, 'cause she was the best seamstress.
FARMER: But if you can't read, how did the map help you? How did you find my house?
SLAVE: It warn't a paper map. Pap drew the directions in the dirt. Told me I needed to know where we was headed, in case we got separated. After me and Mam

studied that map, Pap scraped his foot across the dirt 'til the map was gone. But I 'membered how it looked.

FARMER: I should let you rest. You're probably tired, and you have another long journey ahead of you yet tonight. You'll arrive at the next resting place before daylight. It's right on the Ohio River, so you'll be crossing that tomorrow night.

SLAVE: How'm I gonna walk clear to the Ohio River by tomorrow night? These legs are strong, but ...

FARMER: You won't be walking. You'll be riding in a wagon with two other runaways. You'll have baskets of eggs, and if anyone stops you, you say you're delivering eggs for your master. First you'll need to change your clothes.

SLAVE: I have no other clothes.

FARMER: I have clothes for you. My neighbors collect money to help with this work, and I use it to buy food and clothes. Many people believe slavery is wrong, and they're willing to contribute to this effort.

SLAVE: Mam told me not to accept charity.

FARMER: This isn't charity. This is giving you a better chance to escape. As you are now, in ragged clothes and unwashed, you look like a runaway. When you leave here in clean clothes and shoes and with your face washed, you won't call attention to yourself.

SLAVE: *(Fingers the bottom of shirt he's wearing.)* My mam made this shirt. She wove the cotton and sewed the seams. Wearing this shirt feels a little as if my mam is still here with me.

FARMER: I'll wash your clothes and pack them away and save them for you. Someday, when the people of the South have accepted that slavery can no longer exist, you can come back here as a free person and get your clothes. You can walk down my path in daylight and

not care who sees you. When you knock on my door, I will open it and cry, "Welcome!" and not worry who might hear me.

SLAVE: *(Stands.)* **You really think that will happen?**

FARMER: It will happen. It *must* happen. It may take longer than we'd like, and we may end up fighting our brothers in order to achieve it, but it's the only way for our country to survive.

SLAVE: You are brave to help me. Many won't, even if they believe slavery is wrong. My brother told me they fear retaliation. And many cling to the old ways, whether those ways was right or not.

FARMER: You're the one with courage. I'm privileged to help you on your path to freedom.

SLAVE: I hope my mam and pap will run away again. Maybe next time they'll make it.

FARMER: Sleep now, my friend. I'll wake you in an hour so you have time to wash and change clothes before you leave.

SLAVE: I know not how to thank you.

FARMER: Someday, after you are free, you will have an opportunity to help someone who needs assistance. When you give that help, think of me. *(FARMER offers his hand; SLAVE shakes it.)*

SLAVE: I'll be back when I can come in daylight, to collect the clothes my mam made me.

FARMER: And I will welcome you.

24. Too Tall, Too Short

Cast: TALL person and SHORT person
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None

TALL: I'm the tallest person in my class. Every year when we get a class picture taken, I have to stand in the back row. All through elementary school when we lined up to go anywhere, I was the last kid in line.

SHORT: I'm the shortest kid in my whole school. People who don't know me sometimes think I'm in third grade.

TALL: Every chance I get I drink coffee, because Grandma says coffee will stunt my growth. So far it hasn't worked.

SHORT: I take a multivitamin pill every day. I avoid sugar and eat lots of salads. I even eat cauliflower, which is my least favorite food in the whole world. Maybe if I get healthy enough, I'll have a growth spurt.

TALL: I should have started drinking coffee when I was in kindergarten. My parents should have filled my baby bottles with coffee instead of milk. Even if I stunt my growth now, it's too late.

SHORT: I can't reach the top shelves in any of the grocery stores. Yesterday I had to ask a stranger to hand me a box of cat litter.

TALL: People ask me, "How's the weather up there?" Ha, ha. Very funny. I've only heard that about six hundred times.

SHORT: I am so sick of being called Shrimp or Shorty.

TALL: They call me Giraffe or Bean Pole and think it's the cleverest joke in the universe. I try to be a good sport, but it isn't easy.

SHORT: Why is it considered impolite to comment on

another person's weight, but it's OK to discuss their height? Both are personal matters.

TALL: If I weighed too much, I could diet. If I was too thin, I could eat more. But I can't do anything about how tall I am, so why do people have to make a big deal of it?

SHORT: I know! It isn't fair that people make fun of something we can't control.

TALL: I'm always bumping my head on low entryways.

SHORT: When I go to a movie, I can never see over the person in front of me.

TALL: A regular twin bed is too short for me. I have to keep my knees bent, and I wake up in the morning all stiff.

SHORT: Every time I buy a pair of pants, I have to hem them.

TALL: Don't get me started on buying clothes. I have to get the "Tall" size, and it always costs about five dollars more than the same thing in a regular size.

SHORT: I love to play sports, but being short is a handicap in everything except gymnastics. I tried doing gymnastics, but I get scared on the balance beam.

TALL: My dad says maybe I can be a professional basketball or volleyball player. Then my height would be an advantage. The trouble is ... I'm not that good at sports. I'm tall, but I'm not fast, and I have terrible coordination.

SHORT: I can't even reach some of the kitchen cupboards in my own house. And forget about trying to take a sweater off the shelf in my bedroom closet.

TALL: If a genie came along and granted me one wish, I would wish to be six inches shorter.

SHORT: If I could have one wish granted, I'd wish to be six inches taller.

TALL: I wonder what other kids would wish for, kids who are an average height.

SHORT: I know one kid who would wish for different blood. He goes to my cousin's school, and he has a rare blood disease. The people in his school and community hold fundraisers to help pay for his medical expenses. My cousin's been working at car washes and bake sales to raise money.

TALL: A rare blood disease makes being too tall or too short seem trivial, doesn't it?

SHORT: Even with treatment, the outlook is not good for him. He'd probably trade places with me in a heartbeat, even if it meant he would never be more than five feet tall.

TALL: He'd trade with me too, even if he got called Giraffe for the rest of his life.

SHORT: I think I'll change my wish and ask the magic genie to grant good health to all kids everywhere, no matter how short they are.

TALL: Or how tall.

25. Surviving the Ferris Wheel

Cast: RORY and AVERY

Setting: A large waterfront Ferris wheel. Two chairs serve as seats.

Props: None

(As scene opens, the chairs are Center Stage and side by side, facing the audience. RORY and AVERY stand behind them.)

RORY: *(Looking up)* **Wow! That is the tallest Ferris wheel I've ever seen. Five stories high!**

AVERY: I didn't expect it to be quite so big. Are you sure it's safe? Those glass buckets look kind of flimsy.

RORY: This is going to be so cool. What a view we'll have! We'll soar above those buildings and out over the water.

AVERY: Heights make me dizzy. I can't stand by the window in a tall building. *(Starts to turn away.)* **Maybe we can get our money back.**

RORY: *(Grabs AVERY's arm and pulls him/her back.)* **We can't leave now. It's almost our turn.**

AVERY: You go without me. I'll wave at you.

RORY: Once we get on, you're going to love it.

AVERY: *(Points up.)* **See how those buckets are swinging back and forth?**

RORY: Cool!

AVERY: Not cool! Terrifying! This whole idea was a horrible mistake.

RORY: I think we're going to have a bucket all to ourselves.

(Both walk toward seats.)

AVERY: Good. If I throw up, I won't humiliate myself with anyone but you.

RORY: Hop in! Do you want to face forward or backward?

AVERY: It doesn't matter. My eyes will be closed anyway.

(RORY and AVERY sit down.)

RORY: Here we go!

AVERY: What was I thinking? I could have gone to a movie. I could have stayed home and played solitaire. But no, I had to let you talk me into riding the world's tallest Ferris wheel.

RORY: Whoa! *(Rocks forward and back.)* **Feel that? It really sways when they stop for the next bucket to fill.**

AVERY: I will not get off this alive. I can see the headline now: "Student Dies of Fright on Ferris Wheel."

RORY: Are you OK? You look a little pale.

AVERY: *(Grips the seat of the chair.)* **There's no seatbelt, no guard rail, nothing to hold on to. I have to dig my fingernails into the seat and brace my feet to keep from falling out. No, I am *not* OK!**

RORY: You can't fall out. These buckets are as sturdy as a piece of plywood. Look. *(Starts to push against the side.)*

AVERY: Don't demonstrate! I'll pretend to believe you!

RORY: Just relax. Enjoy the view. If you look straight down, you can see the top of that seafood restaurant.

AVERY: I would rather be *in* the seafood restaurant. Instead of spending twelve bucks on this oversize wheel, we could be eating fish and chips!

RORY: You can eat those any time. How many chances do you get to experience this?

AVERY: One too many.

RORY: Oh, look! We're higher than that little floatplane!

AVERY: *(Eyes closed)* **If I survive this, I will never be mean to my brother again. I will do the dishes without being asked. I will be kind to animals and patient with that old woman who fumbles for her change at the grocery store.**

RORY: *(Turns from side to side, looking down.)* **It's like flying. It's *better* than flying! Whoosh! Up, up, up, up, and now dowwwwn. Open your eyes – we're almost**

down to the platform again.

AVERY: Sit still! Every time you lean toward the window, you make the bucket jiggle.

RORY: I wonder how many times we'll go around.

AVERY: Once. Please, please only go around once.

RORY: For the price of the tickets, they should take us up and around for at least half an hour. Maybe ten times.

AVERY: Oh!

RORY: Maybe even more. Yeah! Here we go, up again!

AVERY: The tickets should come with a warning: "This ride may cause nausea, terror, heart attack, or death."

RORY: You are perfectly safe.

AVERY: What's that sound? That whooshing noise?

RORY: I think the wind is picking up.

AVERY: Oh, great. Next the lightning will start.

RORY: Up and down, around and around.

AVERY: *(Opens eyes to glare at RORY.)* **If you say one more word, I will take great pleasure in barfing on your shoes.**

RORY: Oh, no. We're slowing down already. We've only been around twice, and they're stopping and putting new people on.

AVERY: *(Eyes closed again)* **Maybe I can make it. If the bucket doesn't move too much when we stop, I might actually keep my dinner down.**

RORY: Rats. They're unloading the one ahead of us. We'll be next.

AVERY: Yes. Yes!

RORY: The eagle has landed. You can open your eyes.

AVERY: *(Opens eyes and lets go of chair, raising arms in victory.)* **I have survived the worst twenty minutes of my life!** *(RORY and AVERY stand and step away from the chairs.)*

RORY: That was awesome! Do you want to go again?

26. Wedding Plans

Characters: JANE and LAURIE
Setting: No special set required.
Props: Each girl carries a purse. Laurie has a cell phone.

(As scene opens, JANE and LAURIE enter from opposite sides of stage and meet in the middle.)

LAURIE: Jane! Hi!

JANE: Hey, Laurie! I haven't seen you since we graduated. How are you? What are you doing these days?

LAURIE: I'm getting married!

JANE: So am I! When's your wedding?

LAURIE: June thirtieth. When's yours?

JANE: July second. I assume you're marrying Richard?

LAURIE: Richard and I broke up. I met Steve about a week later through an online dating service.

JANE: That's a surprise! Didn't you and Richard date all through high school?

LAURIE: I got tired of Richard. Who are you marrying?

JANE: His name is Jackson. I met him at the U when he was the professor's assistant for a psychology class that I took. He's in grad school now.

LAURIE: Where's your wedding going to be?

JANE: We're having a small informal ceremony in my grandparents' backyard. It'll be just our families and a few close friends. And my dog Lucy's going to be the ring bearer. We're tying the rings to her collar.

LAURIE: Mine is going to be in the main sanctuary at the Cathedral on the Beach.

JANE: Wow! I went there once as part of a local tour. It's huge.

LAURIE: I've always wanted a big wedding. We've invited over three hundred guests, so we need a big space. Today I'm meeting with two of my bridesmaids to tie

the bows.

JANE: Bows?

LAURIE: My colors are blue and silver, so we're using wide blue and silver ribbon to make these huge bows. There'll be one on the end of every pew, all the way down the center aisle. The same ribbons will decorate all the baskets of flowers that we're having at the front of the sanctuary. White roses and blue delphinium.

JANE: It sounds lovely.

LAURIE: What kind of flowers are you having?

JANE: Whatever is in bloom in Grandpa's garden that day. He grows snapdragons, zinnias, daisies, geraniums, and lots of others. I'm sure it will be colorful. He told me he fertilized everything a month in advance.

LAURIE: What about your bouquet?

JANE: Just before the ceremony, we'll cut a few fresh flowers for me to carry. We want to keep the costs down because we need the money for next year's tuition.

LAURIE: You're still at the U?

JANE: Yes. I'm going to summer school too, although I'm not taking a full course load this summer because I'm working part time in the University library.

LAURIE: I don't see how you have time for school and a job. I dropped out of school as soon as I got engaged, and I have spent every day this summer working on the wedding. You can't imagine how long it took to make three hundred little bags and fill them with birdseed so each guest can have some to throw. And the table decorations took weeks! I made these adorable little bride and groom figures out of pipe cleaners and then glued a picture of Steve's face on all the grooms and a picture of my face on all the brides. I still have to make little white dresses for the

brides. I finished the tiny tuxes for the grooms last night.

JANE: Jackson and I took an interesting prenuptial class at the U. It was only two nights, but it covered a lot of topics and really got us talking. They give it every Tuesday and Thursday. You guys might want to do it.

LAURIE: What kind of topics? Like what's the best music for a wedding?

JANE: It was things like how you intend to handle your finances. Separate accounts or all together? Who balances the checkbook?

LAURIE: Oh, I never try to balance the checkbook. Steve can handle that.

JANE: The class also had us discuss kids.

LAURIE: Kids! You aren't pregnant, are you?

JANE: No. This discussion was about if we want them. How many? When? If it should turn out that we can't have kids, how do we feel about adoption or being childless? It was a good talk to have.

LAURIE: We can talk about stuff like that later on, after the wedding. Right now I'm focused on making bows, and we still have to choose between white cake and chocolate cake. We've been buying both from every bakery in town and sampling them. If we don't decide soon, I won't fit into my wedding dress. What kind of cake are you having?

JANE: My sister's going to bake applesauce cupcakes. Jackson and I both love Amy's applesauce cupcakes with caramel frosting.

LAURIE: That doesn't sound very fancy. Wedding cakes are usually at least three tiers with roses made of icing.

JANE: Amy will arrange the cupcakes on a tiered plate and put some fresh flowers in between them. It will be great. It's going to be an informal event, so cupcakes

are perfect.

LAURIE: It will make the cake cutting part easy, that's for sure. Do you mind if I ask you something personal?

JANE: Go ahead.

LAURIE: Where did you get your loan?

JANE: Loan?

LAURIE: To pay for all the wedding stuff. We need to borrow twenty-seven thousand dollars.

JANE: We're paying cash for everything. Our only expenses are the officiator's honorarium and our rings. Oh, and a new collar for Lucy. Her old one was all frayed.

LAURIE: What about your dress? My dress cost almost three thousand dollars. It's gorgeous!

JANE: My mom and I sewed my dress. I wanted something I could wear for other occasions, and we had fun making it together. Jackson's wearing his suit.

LAURIE: Have you hired caterers? Are you serving food afterwards?

JANE: My aunts and Jackson's two sisters are bringing salads and casseroles for the lunch. Grandma already had a big coffee urn, and our wedding gift from my brother was a case of champagne, plus he'll be the waiter. So we're all set.

LAURIE: We'll be making payments for years, but it will be worth it. It's going to be a fabulous wedding.

JANE: It sounds like exactly what you want. Have you and Steve talked about your lives after the wedding?

LAURIE: Of course! We're going to Oahu for our honeymoon.

JANE: I mean long term. You really should look into that pre-marriage class. Probably the best part for us was when we talked about our families. One question was, "Is there anyone in your family that you have not told your fiancé about? If so, why?" It turned out

Jackson has an uncle who's in prison! He's so ashamed of his uncle that he had never told me about him. He said it was a big relief to get that out in the open.

LAURIE: What did his uncle do that landed him in prison?

JANE: He was an alcoholic, and he was driving drunk. He hit a car head-on, and the other driver died. Jackson's uncle was convicted of second degree manslaughter. He sobered up in prison and goes to an AA group and swears he'll never touch a drink again.

LAURIE: I wonder if Steve has any family members that he hasn't told me about. Probably not.

JANE: You should ask him.

LAURIE: You know, maybe I should. *(She takes out a cell phone and makes the call.)* **Hi, sweetie. I have a question for you.** *(Pause)* **No, not about the cake. Do you have any family members that you haven't told me about?** *(Pause. LAURIE's jaw drops.)* **What?! How old is she? Who's the mother? Do you ever see her? Do you pay child support?** *(Pause)* **We need to talk, Steve. Tonight. I know I said I was going to be busy making bows, but this is more important. And don't plan anything for next Tuesday and Thursday. There's a class we have to take together.** *(She hangs up looking dazed.)*

JANE: Steve has a secret?

LAURIE: He has a daughter and an ex-wife. He wanted to tell me but he was afraid if I knew this wasn't his first wedding, it would spoil my excitement.

JANE: I need to get to work. It was nice to see you, Laurie. Good luck with the wedding ... and I'm glad you're going to take that class.

LAURIE: Me too. I wonder what else we need to talk about.

27. Now Hiring

Cast: EMPLOYER and APPLICANT
Setting: An office. Two chairs face each other over a desk.
Props: A clipboard and a pen for Employer
Costumes: Both players should dress in professional attire.

(As scene opens, EMPLOYER and APPLICANT sit facing each other with the desk between them. EMPLOYER has clipboard ready to take notes.)

EMPLOYER: I want to start off by thanking you for coming in today. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

APPLICANT: Certainly, and thank you for having me. Where to begin? Let's see. I was born eighteen years and three weeks ago, at 12:34 a.m. on February second. It was in a car going seventy miles per hour. My dad was speeding to the hospital, because my mom started hollering in the middle of dinner that she was about to have the baby, and my dad didn't know what to do. So my whole family hopped in the car and we were speeding down Highway 99 when –

EMPLOYER: *(Clears throat.)* **I'm sorry to interrupt, but would you mind starting a bit more recently than that?**

APPLICANT: Sure thing! How about high school?

EMPLOYER: That'd be great. Go ahead.

APPLICANT: High school was when I really started developing my unique skill set. I beat my brother's high score on Dance Dance Revolution when I was still in ninth grade! My brother is three years older than I am, by the way. I also started competing in local Rock-Paper-Scissors tournaments. I've been to Rock-Paper-Scissors regionals twice since I started, and I'm training for nationals this year.

EMPLOYER: That's interesting. You would certainly bring diversity to our staff. Have you been involved in any

more organized extracurricular activities? Held any leadership positions?

APPLICANT: Definitely. I co-founded the SAHA club at my school.

EMPLOYER: I've never heard of that. What does SAHA stand for?

APPLICANT: Student Anti-Homework Alliance. It's a national movement. We're a very active chapter.

EMPLOYER: I see. Anything else?

APPLICANT: I'm the teacher's assistant for our school's detention program.

EMPLOYER: That seems like a group that must take some skillful leadership. Were you nominated for that position?

APPLICANT: In a manner of speaking. I had been in detention so often that I started coming out of habit. Mr. Farrington suggested to the principal that they make me his assistant so he didn't have to keep kicking me out when I wasn't in trouble.

EMPLOYER: Let's move on to the questions I have for you.

APPLICANT: Sounds good.

EMPLOYER: Question One: Honesty and integrity are very important to our company. Can you give me an example of a time that you maintained your honesty in the face of opposition?

APPLICANT: One time a girl in our class wore this weird rainbow tunic to school. It was hideous. Everyone else kept smiling and saying it looked good on her, even though we all knew it didn't. I was the only one willing to stand up and tell her that her tunic was horrible.

EMPLOYER: OK. Next question: Almost everything we accomplish here is done in small teams assigned to a particular task. Have you ever worked effectively as a part of a team?

APPLICANT: Of course! This one time I was playing a huge game of capture the flag. I was on the green team. We were amazing! We brought Super Soakers from home and ran straight through enemy territory to find the flag. No one even tried to tag us.

EMPLOYER: Well, that does sound like you were thinking outside the box. How about question three: Tell me about a time you were faced with a stressful situation, and explain how you handled it.

APPLICANT: A few weeks back I had two essays due Friday, and I left them until Thursday night. I was freaking out, so I went to QFC and bought two pints of Ben & Jerry's. While I took a study break to eat them, I remembered advice I'd once received: "Don't sweat the small stuff."

EMPLOYER: And that helped calm you down?

APPLICANT: Definitely. I resolved to do better next time and went to bed.

EMPLOYER: And you didn't ... Well, never mind. How about an example of a time that you were resourceful?

APPLICANT: Oh, that's easy! On the way here I got pulled over for speeding. Luckily I had a box of Krispy Kreme donuts on the passenger seat that I was going to bring to butter you up. I thought fast and gave them to the officer in exchange for getting away with a warning.

EMPLOYER: I don't mean to be rude, but that's not exactly the answer we're looking for.

APPLICANT: I'm sorry, that wasn't the best example to use. You're hungry for donuts now.

EMPLOYER: That's not what I meant, but let's move on. In our line of work, you'll need to be capable of demonstrating a high degree of professionalism in interacting with our customers. What would you do if

a customer became frustrated with the service you were providing?

APPLICANT: I would thank them for expressing their frustrations and point them politely in the direction of the door.

EMPLOYER: Please keep in mind that our customers are the number-one reason for our success as a business. Would you like to change your answer?

APPLICANT: I guess I would give them a free keychain on their way out.

EMPLOYER: We don't provide complimentary keychains.

APPLICANT: A pen, then.

EMPLOYER: We don't provide complimentary pens either. Is there anything else we should know about you in considering you for hire?

APPLICANT: I'd be happy to be in charge of getting company keychains made! I did that for SAHA – they were a huge success.

EMPLOYER: That's good to know. I think we'll wrap things up there. Do you have any questions for me?

APPLICANT: Do employees get paid time off? I'm kind of prone to strep throat.

EMPLOYER: We decide that on a case-by-case basis. Anything else?

APPLICANT: When should I call you back?

EMPLOYER: Please don't trouble yourself. We'll call you.

APPLICANT: Are you sure?

EMPLOYER: Very sure.

APPLICANT: OK. *(Stands up and starts for the door.)* **Thank you for your time!**

EMPLOYER: *(Smiles and waves.)* **Thank you so much for coming in.**

28. Dear Crabby

Cast: CRABBY, an advice columnist, and STENO, Crabby's assistant

Setting: Crabby's office. One small table is Center Stage.

Props: A stack of letters to Crabby are on the table. Steno has a tablet and pen to pretend to write down Crabby's answers.

CRABBY: I hope we have some interesting letters today. I'm tired of the same old problems. I never knew so many kids needed a cure for acne or help getting a date for the prom.

STENO: When you write an advice column for teens, you're bound to hear from people who worry about acne and prom dates.

CRABBY: Acne and prom dates. *(Sighs.)* **OK, let's get started.**

STENO: *(Picks up letter and pretends to read.)* **"Dear Crabby: Are you aware that it is more than a year since you gave your assistant a pay raise? I think someone who is talented and hard-working should be rewarded with – "**

CRABBY: Wait a minute! You're making that up. Come on, read one of the real letters.

STENO: It was worth a try. *(Picks up the next letter and reads.)* **"Dear Crabby: My history teacher says we have to use at least one original source for our term paper project. I am writing about beer brewing, so I need to go to a local brewery to interview the owner and try some samples. The trouble is, I'm sixteen, and it isn't legal for me to drink beer. I asked my mom to make an appointment for me, but she won't do it. She says I should pick a topic I know about. I can't tell her I already know a lot about beer because she'd have a cow. Will you call the brewery manager and offer to mention his beer in your column in exchange for**

giving me an interview? I've enclosed his name and phone number. You would be helping to further my education. Signed, Too Young."

CRABBY: *(STENO pretends to write this down.)* Dear Too Young: Are you crazy? There is no way I would further your education at a brewery. Get real. I happen to like my job and do not intend to get fired for helping some underaged kid get sloshed. Choose another topic for your term paper.

STENO: *(Reads next letter.)* "Dear Crabby: Your replies are stupid. Why do you give dumb answers that don't solve the problem? Signed, Disgusted." *(STENO hands the letter to CRABBY.)*

CRABBY: *(Looks at the letter and then speaks. STENO writes.)* Dear Disgusted: I recognize your handwriting. I take it you didn't like my advice to forget about getting revenge on your biology teacher by spray-painting his car. As for this letter, my mother said if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. I suggest you do what Mama said. Please don't write again.

STENO: *(Picks up another letter and reads.)* "Dear Crabby: I am seventeen and I've been dating my boyfriend Joe for three years. We'll both graduate from high school soon. I'm going to a state college and have rented an apartment near the campus. Joe wants to share the apartment. He says he really loves me, and we'll be able to get married sooner if he can save his money instead of paying rent. One thing worries me. Joe says if he moves in, my dog has to leave. I adopted Maxie at the animal shelter when I was six. She is well-behaved, friendly, and sleeps on my bed every night. Joe says he won't share our home with a dog. What should I do? Signed, Dog Lover."

CRABBY: Well, this one is easy. *(STENO writes.)* Dear Dog Lover: You don't need a boyfriend who hates dogs

and expects you to pay his rent. Keep Maxie and dump Joe.

STENO: *(Reads next letter.)* **"Dear Crabby: My best friend has become a vegan. That would be OK, except now she wants everyone in the world to quit eating meat and dairy products. We always sit together in the school cafeteria, but every time I have a ham sandwich or a cheeseburger, she starts quoting statistics about how the meat industry is one of the most significant contributors to serious environmental problems. She says that refusing to eat meat or dairy is the single most effective thing you can do to reduce your carbon footprint. I want to be a good citizen and help the earth, but do I really have to give up cheeseburgers? Signed, Bacon Lover."**

CRABBY: *(STENO writes.)* **Dear Bacon Lover: According to the Environmental Protection Agency, runoff from factory farms pollutes our waterways more than all other sources combined. Your friend is right, but trying to bully her classmates into eating her way is wrong. Sit with someone else at lunch, but also learn how your food is supplied. It takes more than 2,400 gallons of water to produce one pound of meat, but only 25 gallons of water to grow one pound of wheat.**

STENO: No kidding? I thought vegetarians and vegans cut out meat or dairy for humane reasons, not to help the environment. I mean, we all know about the animal cruelty, but we choose to ignore it.

CRABBY: Not all of us do.

STENO: Are you saying you don't eat meat?

CRABBY: That's right.

STENO: I didn't know that. I didn't know about the pollution, either.

CRABBY: Keep reading "Dear Crabby" and you'll learn a lot. We aim to educate, except when it comes to under-

age beer drinkers.

STENO: *(Reading another letter)* "Dear Crabby: Are you still alive? If you are, please answer my letter right away. If you have already died, have someone close to you write back because I really, really need advice. Signed, Desperate."

CRABBY: *(STENO writes.)* Dear Desperate: I'm alive, but it's hard to give advice when you never told me what the problem is. However, I have figured it out. You are in need of a brain transplant. I'm sorry that I can't help you.

STENO: *(Reading another letter)* "Dear Crabby: I have a problem with my grandma. She steals things. When we go grocery shopping, she slips small items into her coat pockets. I've seen her take cans of tuna, candy bars, and a bottle of vitamins. Yesterday I saw her put a carton of yogurt in her purse. When we were waiting in the checkout line I said, "Grandma, don't forget the yogurt that's in your purse." She got really angry and told me to be quiet. When we got out to the car, she said the big stores make a huge profit while senior citizens pinch pennies. She told me the store would never notice a carton of yogurt. That is probably true, but I still think it's wrong to take something without paying for it. What do you think? Signed: Honest Olivia."

CRABBY: Dear Honest Olivia: If the store's security guard catches your grandma shoplifting, she could be arrested. Next time, she should be more careful! Your job is to make sure Granny has a good lawyer.

STENO: I don't think we can publish that.

CRABBY: Maybe not. I'm running out of good advice.

STENO: OK. Last letter for today. *(Reads.)* "Dear Crabby: My twin sister and I are adopted. A year ago we decided we wanted to know who our birth parents

are. Mom and Dad are wonderful parents, so it isn't like we wanted to escape or anything. We were just curious. We decided to search secretly so we didn't hurt Mom and Dad's feelings. After six months of hitting dead ends, my sister gave up and said she really didn't care if she ever found out or not. I kept searching, and last week I found my birth mother. I was shocked to learn that she is an alcoholic and drug addict who lives on the streets. I saw a photo of her, but I have not gone to the town where she lives. I can't imagine anything good coming from a meeting with her. I don't know if I should tell my sister what I found out or if I should forget it. What should I do? Signed, Sorry I Searched."

CRABBY: *(STENO writes.)* Dear Sorry: My criteria for giving out information is to ask three questions: Will it help someone if you tell? Will it make the person you tell happier? Will it serve some useful purpose? I think you would have to answer no to all three of those questions, so my advice is to keep quiet about what you learned. If your sister decides she wants to search again in the future, you can tell her then what you found out. Meanwhile, this would be a good time to tell your adoptive parents how much you love them.

STENO: That's all the letters for today.

CRABBY: What a pleasant surprise! There wasn't a single plea for an acne cure, and no problems with a prom date.

STENO: There were, actually. I tossed those out before you got here so you wouldn't have to deal with them.

CRABBY: You screened the letters?

STENO: There were four acnes and six prom date problems.

CRABBY: You are the best assistant I've ever had! You deserve a raise.

29. The World's Finest Cutlery

Cast: SALESPERSON and CUSTOMER

Setting: Customer's home. A table and two chairs are Center Stage.

Props: Three forks, three knives, and three spoons, all wrapped in a cloth and carried in by Salesperson. Sheet of paper and pen are carried by Salesperson with the cutlery.

(As scene opens, SALESPERSON enters and pretends to knock on a door. CUSTOMER enters from opposite side of stage and pantomimes peering out peephole and opening door.)

SALESPERSON: Good morning, Mrs. Semple!

CUSTOMER: Hello, Logan. Come on in.

SALESPERSON: Thank you for letting me do this demo. It really helps me out a lot.

CUSTOMER: I'm glad to hear that, honey. Now, you're sure you'll get paid just for showing me the product? As I told you on the phone, I'm not in the market for cutlery.

SALESPERSON: Absolutely, Mrs. Semple. Our program rewards sales reps just for getting our company name out there. I'm paid by the demo, unless I make more in commissions. It's as easy as that.

CUSTOMER: Well, that's good news. Won't you have a seat?

SALESPERSON: Thank you. *(Sits at table.)*

CUSTOMER: *(Sits opposite SALESPERSON.)* **How's your mother?**

SALESPERSON: She's doing well. She and my dad are on vacation this week.

CUSTOMER: That sounds wonderful.

SALESPERSON: Shall we get started?

CUSTOMER: Yes, I'm ready. Do you need anything from me?

SALESPERSON: Nope! Nothing at all, except for you to make yourself comfortable.

CUSTOMER: I'm ready when you are. What is it that you're showing me?

SALESPERSON: *(Stands and begins unrolling cloth. Sets cutlery out carefully in a row and begins to polish each piece with the cloth in turn.)* **Mrs. Semple, you're in for a treat. Today I'm going to show you the finest cutlery in the world.**

CUSTOMER: Really? I didn't know the brand of cutlery made much of a difference. I've never used a fork or spoon that didn't do the same basic job.

SALESPERSON: In that case, you've been missing out.

CUSTOMER: I have?

SALESPERSON: Don't tell me you've never heard of Cutler's Cutlery!

CUSTOMER: I'm afraid I haven't.

SALESPERSON: I'm surprised! Cutler's is internationally recognized as the world's best.

CUSTOMER: What makes it so much better than other brands? My forks have tines. My spoons hold oatmeal and yogurt. What more do I need from them?

SALESPERSON: If that's all you're asking of your spoons and forks, you've been living a deprived life. Let me start you off with our soup spoon.

CUSTOMER: I'm afraid I don't need soup spoons. I've simply never liked soup.

SALESPERSON: Never liked soup? But Mrs. Semple, have you ever stopped to ask yourself why you don't like soup?

CUSTOMER: It's because of the flavor, I suppose.

SALESPERSON: Not at all! The secret to perfect soup is in the spoon.

CUSTOMER: It is? How so?
SALESPERSON: Would you drink wine from an egg cup?
CUSTOMER: No, I wouldn't.
SALESPERSON: And why not? Because it's the wrong shape, of course! The perfect spherical shape of this soup spoon ensures that not a single nuance of flavor will escape your senses.
CUSTOMER: But what if they're nuances of a flavor I don't like in the first place?
SALESPERSON: I assure you that you don't enjoy soup because you haven't tasted it as it's meant to be enjoyed – from a perfectly shaped spoon.
CUSTOMER: Let's table the soup discussion. What other spoons do you have?
SALESPERSON: I'm glad you asked. Next up is our cereal spoon. What sets our cereal spoon apart is its unique temperature-regulating technology that keeps your hot cereal hot and cold cereal cold the entire way from the bowl to your mouth.
CUSTOMER: Can temperature really change much in that transition?
SALESPERSON: Of course it can! Do you know the temperature range considered by the Food and Drug Administration to be the food danger zone?
CUSTOMER: I used to know this.
SALESPERSON: It's between forty-one and one-thirty-five degrees Fahrenheit. And what separates the safe food temperature of forty point nine nine nine degrees from the unsafe food temperature of forty-one? An infinitesimal fraction of a degree Fahrenheit!
CUSTOMER: All right, I see where you're going.
SALESPERSON: Cutler's Cutlery makes your safety our number-one priority. No one wants to eat unsafe cereal.

CUSTOMER: Is that a third spoon?
SALESPERSON: It certainly is. Intrigued?
CUSTOMER: Yes, I'm intrigued as to why I need three spoons in one table setting.
SALESPERSON: This third spoon is my personal favorite because it's for the dessert course. It's a multitalented spoon. It's designed with a fine edge and streamlined shape for cutting through the crisp crust of crème brûlée as easily as it slices into a scoop of hard-packed ice cream. Yes ma'am, this spoon is made for everything from sundaes to burnt cream to custard!
CUSTOMER: I hate to say it, but I'm on a diet. A dessert-specific spoon is the last temptation I need lying around the house. And just out of curiosity, my cereal spoon won't work for dessert because ...
SALESPERSON: *(Holds two spoons up.)* **Look more closely. See the razor-fine edge on the dessert spoon as compared with the cereal spoon? A cereal spoon just won't slice into all your favorite creamy confections with the same finesse.**
CUSTOMER: I'm feeling overwhelmed by the spoons, and you're making me hungry for ice cream. Let's skip ahead to the forks. I see you have three of those too.
SALESPERSON: Of course we do! We wouldn't want to let the spoons have all the fun!
CUSTOMER: There's a salad fork, I presume?
SALESPERSON: Definitely. That's this one right here. See its toothpick-sharp points and the fishhook shape of the middle tines? No vitamin-packed spinach leaf is ever going to escape you again. Over the course of a lifetime, the average American is eluded by four to five hundred leaves of spinach on any number of dinner plates. You know, the leaves that become glued to the plate by salad dressing and you just can't get them in a civilized manner? Each one of those

leaves contains cancer-combating antioxidants. Over the course of a lifetime, by letting you get every last spinach leaf, this fork can be the difference between lifelong good health and cancer.

CUSTOMER: Are those statistics accurate? I had no idea the effect of a lost spinach leaf here and there could add up to such disastrous consequences. I have a family history of cancer, you know.

SALESPERSON: I had no idea! Are you taking the proper precautions?

CUSTOMER: Well, I do regular screenings, and I do my very best to eat healthy. But –

SALESPERSON: But you never thought twice about the role your fork could play in protecting you from disease. When you get right down to it, this fork could be the difference between life and death.

CUSTOMER: May I? *(Reaches for fork.)*

SALESPERSON: Of course! And see how nicely it pairs with our other forks? Here we have our steak fork with adjustable tines. This is a Cutler's specialty. Everyone prefers different-sized bites of steak. You wouldn't expect a three-hundred pound dad to share a steak fork with his five-year-old daughter, would you?

CUSTOMER: Of course not. That's just insensitive.

SALESPERSON: Exactly! But here you have the solution to that problem: a fork that adjusts to fit the needs of everyone around the table.

CUSTOMER: And this fork? It's miniscule! What can it possibly do?

SALESPERSON: The better question would be, what can't it do? This little sucker is ready and willing to stab anything that comes in your path at a cocktail bar: olives, mini-onions, peanuts or pretzels. No one likes to touch those snacks with their hands. Am I right?

CUSTOMER: Now that you mention it, that sounds terribly germy. Maybe I need one of these little guys.

SALESPERSON: Now, don't jump the gun, Mrs. Semple. You still haven't seen the knives. You'll get the best deal by far on our cutlery if you buy our complete cutlery set.

CUSTOMER: Is that right? And just how much would the full shebang set me back?

SALESPERSON: I'll get there in a minute. First, behold the finest butter knife in America: the Electric Butter Eel!

CUSTOMER: I've never heard of any brand name that sounds more unappetizing! Why would anyone name their knife an Electric Butter Eel?

SALESPERSON: Because it really is electric! Riddle me this, Mrs. Semple: What's the most frustrating kitchen hitch you run into on a regular basis?

CUSTOMER: When my husband leaves his dirty dishes in the sink.

SALESPERSON: What about when you forget to set the butter out to thaw before you need it? You're groggy on Monday morning, you go to have a nice waffle with a pat of melty butter and drizzle of maple syrup, and instead you get a fat buttery ice cube in the middle of your toasted waffle. It cools the whole thing down instantly!

CUSTOMER: It is annoying when that happens. I get tired of having to let butter thaw before I bake, too. Maybe that *is* my biggest kitchen pet peeve.

SALESPERSON: Of course it is! It's universal. Check this out: *(Holding up a knife)* flip this convenient, ergonomic switch hidden discreetly at the base of the knife, and the Electric Butter Eel slides straight through even the most Antarctic butter.

CUSTOMER: All right, Logan. I have to admit you caught me. That butter knife is truly remarkable. How much

does it cost?

SALESPERSON: Mrs. Semple, I couldn't let you buy just one lonely knife. What a rip-off! The price point drops breathtakingly when you buy the full set of Cutler's Cutlery.

CUSTOMER: Fine, just go ahead and tell me. What does the set run for?

SALESPERSON: Because you're one of my oldest neighbors and family friends, I can offer you a price you can't find anywhere on store shelves.

CUSTOMER: How much?

SALESPERSON: Five hundred.

CUSTOMER: Five hundred ... dollars?

SALESPERSON: Yes, ma'am.

CUSTOMER: For a set of how many place settings?

SALESPERSON: One place setting.

CUSTOMER: You must be joking!

SALESPERSON: Think about it, Mrs. Semple. I'm offering you a set of silverware that has the power to open you up to a whole new food group, *(Holding up soup spoon)* **protect your family from food poisoning,** *(Holding up cereal spoon)* **make eating dessert easy on your arm,** *(Holding up dessert spoon)* **let you declare victory once and for all over modern humans' age-old kitchen nemesis, frozen butter,** *(Holding up butter knife)* **and very probably keep your family out of the deathly jaws of that hideous monster, cancer,** *(Holding up salad fork)* **and so much more that we haven't even discussed! Now, tell me that isn't worth five hundred dollars of the money that's sitting in your bank account collecting cobwebs and dust right this moment.**

CUSTOMER: I would need four sets! For Darby and the kids and me.

SALESPERSON: I can do that for you. Have I mentioned

our layaway plan or told you about our lifetime guarantee?

CUSTOMER: Darby would kill me with his own two hands if he found out I spent two thousand dollars on forks and knives.

SALESPERSON: The finest forks and knives money can buy. What he ought to do is thank you on bended knee. What do you say? Shall I fill out your order form for you?

CUSTOMER: *(Long pause as CUSTOMER looks longingly over the cutlery spread out before her.)* **Oh, all right. Do it quickly! Darby will be up from his nap any minute.**

SALESPERSON: Of course! I've got the form pre-drawn up for just these sorts of sales. *(Sets paper and a pen in front of CUSTOMER.)* **If you would, check the box that best matches your preferred payment plan, and let me get your credit card here and your John Hancock right down here. I'll leave you with my cutlery set right now and pick another three up for you from the office when I go in tomorrow morning.**

CUSTOMER: *(Filling out form)* **That's all there is to it?**

SALESPERSON: That's all! Pretty easy, no?

CUSTOMER: That was almost too easy!

SALESPERSON: I really appreciate your business, Mrs. Semple. You've been a great customer. I'll send the rest of the cutlery over tomorrow. Give me a call if you ever want to see our specialty catalogue, OK? There's so much more to be had from Cutler's!

CUSTOMER: I'll do that! But first I'm going to show Darby what I just got!

SALESPERSON: *(Shifts uncomfortably at this thought and pushes cutlery set on its cloth toward CUSTOMER.)* **I'll let you get back to your afternoon. Thank you so much for having me here!** *(Stands and begins to leave.)*

CUSTOMER: *(Stands to walk SALESPERSON to the door.)*

OK, honey. Thank you for the cutlery! Be sure to tell your mother hello, and best of luck with the job!

SALESPERSON: I'll see you later, Mrs. Semple. Enjoy the world's finest cutlery!

CUSTOMER: Thank you, Logan! Buh-bye! *(Pantomimes shutting door. Returns to table and admires cutlery delightedly for a moment. Then she walks past table toward opposite site of stage, yelling)* **Darby, honey! Wake up and come downstairs! I want to show you what I just got us!**

30. Forced to Go to Camp

Cast: SAM and MAX. Players should be of the same sex.
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None

SAM: I am *so* excited about going to camp. I wish we were leaving today!
MAX: Not me. I'm only going because my parents won't let me stay home. They think I need a role model and the camp counselor will be it.
SAM: Seriously? A role model?
MAX: A role model. They also say I need to make friends.
SAM: They may be right about that.
MAX: I already have all the friends I want.
SAM: You do?
MAX: I do.
SAM: But do you have a close friend? A best friend?
MAX: I have two extremely close friends.
SAM: I never see you hanging out with anyone at school.
MAX: They don't go to this school.
SAM: What are their names?
MAX: Beanie and Grumpypants.
SAM: Beanie is your dog, and Grumpypants is your cat.
MAX: I know who they are! They're my best friends, and I'd have lots more friends if the stupid Homeowner's Association rules didn't limit each household to no more than two animals.
SAM: Four-legged friends don't count.
MAX: Why not? They're better than most of the two-legged variety.
SAM: Be serious.
MAX: I am perfectly serious. Has your dog ever spread rumors about you behind your back?

SAM: Of course not.

MAX: Has your cat ever been nice to you only while she runs for class secretary and then quits being nice as soon as the election is over?

SAM: Well, no, but –

MAX: Does your dog ask to copy your homework because he was too busy playing computer games to do it himself?

SAM: Be reasonable.

MAX: Four-legged friends are just as important as the two-legged kind. Maybe more important. They are definitely less annoying.

SAM: Beanie and Grumpypants are great pets, but friends are supposed to be human.

MAX: Says who? I don't need more humans mucking up my life. I just want to be left alone, and instead I am forced against my will to go to camp, and what's more, I am expected to participate in all the ridiculous camp activities. I have strict orders to *enjoy myself.* As if!

SAM: The camp activities sound cool. We're going to learn how to row boats. We'll put on skits. There'll be two volleyball teams.

MAX: Bleh! I'd rather lie on my bunk and read or walk along the lakeshore by myself. Better yet, I'd read with Grumpypants beside me on my bunk and go for a walk with Beanie.

SAM: You really are a loner.

MAX: What's wrong with that? I'm not hurting anyone. I'm happy this way.

SAM: What you need is a Gregarious Pill to make you outgoing and eager to meet the other campers. You might even lead a sing-along around the campfire.

MAX: That would be my nightmare.

SAM: Alas, Gregarious Pills do not yet have FDA approval.

MAX: The leaders of Camp Jovial are stuck with me the way I am.

SAM: Actually, I like you the way you are.

MAX: You do?

SAM: With most kids, I feel like I have to be all bubbly and enthusiastic. I pretend to like everything they like. With you, I can relax and be myself. You're nonjudgmental. You accept me the way I am and don't criticize.

MAX: Just like Beanie and Grumpypants.

SAM: So you really don't want to go to camp?

MAX: I really don't want to go. But I'm going whether I want to or not.

SAM: I was hoping we could be camp roommates. There's a place on the form where we can request who we bunk with.

MAX: Are your parents making you do this? Did my mom call your mom?

SAM: No.

MAX: Then why are you suggesting it?

SAM: I thought it would be fun to room together.

MAX: You honestly want to room with me?

SAM: Yes, if you want to room with me.

MAX: Well, sure. I'd like to room with you. Thanks! Camp might not be so bad if you were my roommate.

SAM: Good. Then that's settled.

MAX: I thought one reason you want to go to camp is to make new friends.

SAM: It is. I'll still meet new people, but it will be nice to have someone I already know as my roommate. This way there's no chance either of us will get stuck with some kid who smuggles in cigarettes or who tells endless bad jokes.

MAX: I still wish they allowed animals at Camp Jovial. It'd be even more fun if Beanie were there with us.

SAM: What about Grumpypants? Don't you want to take him along?

MAX: No way. He would hate going to camp even more than I do. He's a loner. Like me.

SAM: Beanie would love all the people, though. He's social. Like me.

MAX: Actually, Beanie is like both of us. He enjoys it when people give him attention, but he's also content to stay home and do nothing. He's happy no matter what.

SAM: Which seems like a good way to live.

MAX: My dog can be my role model!

SAM: I think your parents are right. You *do* need to go to camp.

31. Mourning a Noun Cements

Cast: HAYDEN and BLAKE

Setting: A high school newsroom. A desk and two chairs face the audience.

Props: Hayden and Blake each have a piece of paper from which they read.

(As scene opens, HAYDEN and BLAKE sit side by side at the desk, facing the audience. Their papers are on the desk in front of them.)

HAYDEN: Good morning, and welcome to Pretown High School's morning video announcements. I'm Hayden Jorgensen ...

BLAKE: And I'm Blake Bendix, and we're here to make Pretown High sound less boring than it actually is. Take it away, Hayden.

HAYDEN: A lot's happened since last Monday, Blake. *(Reads from paper.)* **This week's feature story centers around one very concerning statistic. According to a school-wide study conducted by the Academic Resource Center, student spelling scores have decreased by ten percent since last year. That's statistically significant, folks.**

BLAKE: The sudden drop in spelling competence concerns our administration because spelling ability has been linked directly with success on state-administered reading and writing exams. A student-teacher task force has been assembled to further investigate the issue and recommend a course of action.

HAYDEN: Serious stuff, Blake. Moving on to a report on school health: *(Reads)* **Our school nurse, Ms. Hasson, says she's seen a record amount of patience with the flu this season.** *(Looks at audience.)* **Now hold on a**

minute. You're not supposed to be patient with the flu. You're supposed to drink tons of fluids and take vitamin C.

BLAKE: That's what I do too. Thanks for bringing our attention to the issue, Ms. Hasson. Don't let your flu get the best of you. Take control and put the kibosh on it.

HAYDEN: *(Reads.)* Speaking of the flu, I have an update on everyone's favorite calculus teacher, Mr. Severson. Mr. Severson has been recovering from the flu himself, and the math department would like everyone to know that "Get Well" carbs can be dropped off at the door of Mr. Griffin's classroom any time before the end of the school day tomorrow.

BLAKE: What kinds of carbs? Breads? Pasta? That's the last thing I would want after a bad bout of the flu. My mom always makes me a hearty beef stew.

HAYDEN: That sounds better to me too, but we're not the ones recovering, Blake. Anyway, whatever baguettes or rolls you've got lying around, Mr. Griffin will be collecting them tomorrow afternoon and taking them to Mr. Severson at his home. He is expected to make a full recovery and be back to teaching sines and cosines in no time.

BLAKE: *(Reads.)* In fact, we have a message here to pass along from Severson himself: "You still have to turn in your homework on time."

HAYDEN: Dang. Really?

BLAKE: Focus, Hayden.

HAYDEN: Right you are, Blake. *(Reads.)* On to sports. The golf team is sponsoring an amateur golf tournament to raise money for their trip to 3A regionals. Pars of two should sign up with Coach Ruben by November 15th.

BLAKE: Pars of two! No one's going to sign up for that! I'm

like a par ten.

HAYDEN: Me too. Easily. Maybe Coach Ruben can do it. I heard he was pro in his day.

BLAKE: Unreal. Anyway, thanks Hayden. *(Reads.)* Now, we'll take a break for a massage from our dearly beloved principal, Mr. Veith. *(Looks at HAYDEN.)* Wait, Mr. Veith is going to give us a massage? That's weird. I would think he would have more important things to take care of. I could use a massage, but preferably not from him.

HAYDEN: *(Stage whisper)* Blake, pay attention. It's supposed to say "message."

BLAKE: Oh. *(To camera)* And now we'll take a break for a message from our dearly beloved principal, Mr. Veith. He has a public service announcement for us: "No testing while driving."

HAYDEN: *(To BLAKE)* What kind of tests does he think we're taking behind the wheel?

BLAKE: I don't know. Maybe he means he wants us to boycott the driver's test.

HAYDEN: That'd be fine. I've failed my driver's test three times already.

BLAKE: Or maybe he means people are finishing take-home tests on their way to school in the mornings. *(To camera)* That's cutting it a little close, people. Please don't test and drive. It can wait.

HAYDEN: Have we got anything from the counselor's office today, Blake?

BLAKE: *(Reads.)* Looks like we do! Ms. Michelle says to tell you all that her collage essay contest is now open for submissions. Please submit your collage essay in the drop box outside her door.

HAYDEN: Wait, I'm confused on behalf of our viewers. Do they need to submit a collage or an essay?

BLAKE: Maybe both. Or either. It's nice to have a little

room for creativity on a contest like this. Maybe I'll do a photo essay. Sounds pretty quick and easy.

HAYDEN: I guess a picture really is worth a thousand words these days. I wonder if I could submit a collage for my college essay.

BLAKE: Ask Ms. Michelle. She's here as a resource on these sorts of things. How about a weather report, Hayden?

HAYDEN: Sure thing. *(Reads.)* Tomorrow through Friday it's going to be windy with an eighty percent chance of crowds.

BLAKE: Eighty percent chance we'll see crowds? For what event?

HAYDEN: I'm not positive. Maybe for the football game on Friday?

BLAKE: That's a good guess. Don't forget to come out and cheer the team, guys. Just because our record is two and twenty-one doesn't mean we can't make a comeback.

HAYDEN: *(Stage whisper)* Blake. It totally does mean that.

BLAKE: *(To camera)* And either way, the homecoming dance is Friday night after the game! *(Reads.)* This year's theme will be topical.

HAYDEN: Oh, good. What's the topic?

BLAKE: It doesn't say. Usually homecoming is "Hawaiian Paradise" or "Margaritaville" or something island-y. I'm not sure why they didn't specify it this year.

HAYDEN: What matters is that we'll get to have a great time with our classmates.

BLAKE: That's right. Speaking of classmates, are there any updates on the class election campaign?

HAYDEN: It's going to be a blowout victory. Kate Wallingford is the only one running for precedent.

BLAKE: OK, I understand that student health goals are an important aspect of each candidate's platform, but

setting a precedent for running isn't the solution to all of our problems. We need to eat healthy and exercise. Besides, how does running show that someone's going to be a good leader?

HAYDEN: *(To camera)* **In short, Blake would like to encourage everyone to do their research before casting a hasty vote. This is an important election. Make your voice heard.**

BLAKE: Thank you, Hayden. *(Reads.)* **One last thing I've been asked to mention ... Mrs. Latona, the art teacher, is collecting cats for her students' final art projects. She's planning to hang them up on the wall, but she doesn't have enough.**

HAYDEN: Excuse me? That's animal cruelty.

BLAKE: That's what it says. I didn't want to mention it at all, either. I'm an active member of PETA, and –

HAYDEN: *(Looking over BLAKE's shoulder)* **Wait a second, Blake. That's supposed to say tacks. Not cats. Mrs. Latona wants to hang the art projects up on the wall using tacks.**

BLAKE: That's even worse! Poor things. What kind of multi-media projects count as art these days? I'm all about creativity, but hanging up cats is taking things too far.

HAYDEN: Blake. No cats are going to be harmed during the making of these art projects. I bet they're doing paintings or papiér-mâché.

BLAKE: Either that or they're all working on their collage essays.

HAYDEN: I guess we'll find out soon enough. *(To camera)* **You can drop off tacks in Mrs. Latona's room today during tutorial. Anything else, Blake?**

BLAKE: I think that sums it up, Hayden. We want to thank you for watching Pretown High School's morning announcements, remind you to check your spelling ...

HAYDEN: And wish you a happy Monday!

BLAKE and HAYDEN: Blake and Hayden, over and out.

32. Paul Revere's Publicist

Cast: WILLIAM and SAMUEL
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None

WILLIAM: There they go again, reciting that pack of lies. The words drift out of the classroom windows, and I can't escape hearing them.

"Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere."

SAMUEL: I can't stand it! I think every school in the country has assigned that poem to their students.

WILLIAM: The worst part is that they all think it's true. They believe Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem told what really happened.

SAMUEL: Ha! We rode that night too, but does anyone ever mention William Dawes or Samuel Prescott? No way! Paul Revere gets all the glory.

WILLIAM: We should write down the factual account. We could start with how Joseph Warren heard through the revolutionary underground that the British were planning to surprise the Patriot leaders, John Hancock and Samuel Adams, in Lexington and arrest them.

SAMUEL: The underground? I heard he got his information from the wife of a British general.

WILLIAM: However he found out, he knew he had to prevent the attack. The British not only planned to arrest the leaders, they intended to go on to Concord and destroy all the supplies that were stored there.

SAMUEL: So Dr. Warren cooked up this great plan to send two messengers to Lexington to alert Adams and Hancock.

WILLIAM: First, he sent for me, William Dawes. Then he

sent for Paul Revere. I was not as well known as Revere, and therefore less likely to be stopped, so he gave me the more difficult land route. I was also a fine actor, if I do say so myself. I could don a floppy hat and pretend to be a drunkard. One way or another, I knew that I could get past the British sentinels.

SAMUEL: Half an hour after you set off, Dr. Warren sent for Paul Revere and told him to cross the Charles River and then continue on horseback to Lexington. First, though, Revere needed to contact the church sexton and have him hold up two lanterns, the prearranged signal that the British were traveling by water.

WILLIAM: In the poem, Paul Revere sees the lantern signal.

SAMUEL: In reality, he gave the signal.

WILLIAM: Two friends rowed Paul across the river, where he borrowed a horse and began his ride. It was a good plan. By using two messengers and two different routes, chances were good that one of us would make it to Lexington.

SAMUEL: As it turned out, you both did.

WILLIAM: Yes. We arrived in time to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock, who then sought safety in Philadelphia. After a half hour's rest, Paul and I mounted our weary horses and headed for Concord to warn the people there.

SAMUEL: That's where I, Samuel Prescott, enter the story. I had been visiting my fiancée and was on my way home when the two of you rode up and passed along the warning. I decided to help spread the word.

WILLIAM: We were mighty glad to have your help, but it wasn't long before the British patrols found us. Paul Revere had ridden ahead, and he got captured.

SAMUEL: I made a break for it. My horse jumped a wall, and I escaped. Because I was familiar with the area, I was able to find my way back to the main road. I found other riders to join the cause, and I made it to Concord to save the supplies.

WILLIAM: I got away from the patrols, but in all the shouting and excitement, my horse threw me and then galloped off. I had to walk back to Lexington.

SAMUEL: So if you and Paul Revere both made the trip from Boston to Lexington to warn the leaders that the British were coming, why is it that Paul gets all the credit?

WILLIAM: For one thing, he was a well-known silversmith at the time. I was an unknown tanner of hides. You know how the press is, always impressed by a celebrity. Also, I was focused on my goal of saving our leaders, so I rode hard and went straight through all the villages and towns. Paul Revere hollered and carried on, woke up the town leaders and military commanders, and told all of them the news. He got everyone fired up, and later, of course, they remembered that he had warned them. Nobody remembered me.

SAMUEL: No one remembers me, either, and I'm the only one of the three riders who made it all the way to Concord.

WILLIAM: Dang horse. I would have got there too if he hadn't bucked me off.

SAMUEL: Why should Paul Revere get a famous poem written about him when you and I did as much or more than he did? It isn't fair.

WILLIAM: My theory is that Longfellow may have received a fine silver bowl not long after he penned those words.

SAMUEL: You don't know that. You can't accuse a famous

poet of accepting a bribe when you have no proof. Maybe Longfellow only wrote about one rider because the poem worked better that way.

"Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of William Dawes, Samuel Prescott, and Paul Revere" doesn't have much of a ring to it.

WILLIAM: He could have said, "Listen my children, without a pause
To the stirring tale of William Dawes."

SAMUEL: That eliminates Paul Revere, which really isn't fair, either. Nothing much rhymes with Prescott, so I'm out of luck.

WILLIAM: What really bothers me is that a poet of such renown would be inaccurate, and nobody cares.

SAMUEL: Maybe Longfellow intended the piece to be fiction. Does it really matter? It isn't as if Paul Revere got any royalties from what Longfellow wrote.

WILLIAM: He got fame. He went from being a silversmith to owning a huge company that makes copper-bottomed cookware. He made a pile of money while you and I slid into obscurity.

SAMUEL: I served as a surgeon in the Continental Army.

WILLIAM: I fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

SAMUEL: Paul Revere had a disastrous military career.

WILLIAM: After the war, I set up a store.

SAMUEL: I never got to marry the sweetheart I was visiting that April night.

WILLIAM: Paul Revere married and had sixteen children!

SAMUEL: " 'Twas the eighteenth of April in seventy-five. Hardly a man is now alive who remembers that famous day and year."

WILLIAM: I remember!

SAMUEL: And I remember!

WILLIAM: It's high time we set the story straight.

SAMUEL: I'll bet some of Paul Revere's kids hired a publicist. They probably sent a copy of Longfellow's poem to every school district in the country. Why else would everyone read it when it's full of errors?

WILLIAM: I say we organize a protest.

SAMUEL: We'll demand our just due!

WILLIAM: "Listen, my children, and you'll agree ... "

SAMUEL: "That the midnight ride was done by three."

33. The Worst Day Ever

Cast: KELSEY and DEVON. Each plays multiple roles.

Setting: A high school auditorium. A small table is Center Stage.

Props: Eight hats. These are used as a way to designate change of character. Kelsey and Devon each wear a hat as scene opens. The rest are on the table.

KELSEY: Welcome to Hapless High School's annual "Worst Day Ever" contest. This year, our contestants will compete to see who had the worst day during this school year. Events didn't have to take place at the school building but must have happened between August 28, when school started, and today.

DEVON: You will each have two minutes to tell us why your day was the most awful experience of your school career. After all the contestants have spoken, our audience will vote to decide the winner. First contestant, please. *(Both remove their hats and place them on the table.)*

KELSEY: *(Puts on a different hat.)* **I was so excited when I got a part-time job with a company that prepares income tax forms. Starting March first, I was supposed to stand in front of their office every afternoon wearing a long blue dress and a crown like the Statue of Liberty. Instead of holding a torch, I held a sign that advertised the company's income tax services. I was supposed to wave the sign back and forth at every car that drove by. This wasn't the greatest job in the world, but I needed the money. I showed up a few minutes early on March first and donned my Miss Liberty costume. Then I went outside and stood on the corner. On March first we broke the all-time record for regional rainfall. It was a record low temperature too, so the rain turned to hail.**

Then it sleeted. The wind gusts were clocked at seventy miles an hour. My crown blew off, and I had to run into traffic to get it back. My arms ached from the heavy sign, and I caught a cold that turned into pneumonia. The doctor's bill came to way more than I earned, because I quit at the end of that first day. March first was definitely my worst day ever. *(Removes hat.)*

DEVON: *(Puts on a different hat.)* **My worst day was the day of the cross-country team's final race. I knew I had a good chance at winning, but when we left the paved road and started across the field, I saw a crow up ahead. I thought, "Cool, there's a big crow in the sky." Then it started circling, and all of a sudden, it swooped down a few yards ahead of me and caught a snake! As it flew back up, I could see the huge nasty thing dangling out of its beak. I hate snakes. I was grossed out, but at least the crow got it out of my path. The crow flew up and out of my sight, and I kept running my hardest. But suddenly, I felt something in my hair. I thought maybe it was a leaf, so I reached up to brush it off, and it was moving! The crow had dropped the snake on my head! I totally freaked out and shook my head like a crazy person and whacked at my hair with my hands until the snake fell back onto the grass and slithered away. Getting the snake off my head only took a few seconds, but checking my hair again and again slowed my race time a lot. All the other runners stared at me brushing at my hair and shaking my head as they ran past. I lost the race, and I still get the heebie-jeebies when I think about the snake.** *(DEVON shudders and removes hat.)*

KELSEY: *(Puts on a different hat.)* **On my worst day, my English teacher, Mr. Withycombe, made an awful announcement. We were expected to turn in a ten-**

page paper by the very next morning! I had never written a ten-page paper, and I was so nervous I could hardly focus through the rest of my classes. I skipped lunch with my friends to do research at the library and almost got a speeding ticket rushing home from school. I spent the whole beautiful sunny afternoon writing frantically, even when my friend Hayley called and offered me an extra ticket to the season opener against the Red Sox. I fell into bed at four a.m. and slept through my alarm. At the seven-thirty bell, I came running into Mr. Withycombe's class still wearing my pajama shirt with my hair unwashed. When Mr. Withycombe asked us to turn in our ten-page papers, everyone chuckled. I started to stand up to bring mine to the front of the class, and everyone stared at me in disbelief. That's when I noticed the date on the board ... April second. The assignment had been Mr. Withycombe's idea of an April Fool's joke, and I was the only one who had fallen for it. Mr. Withycombe didn't even offer to give me extra credit. He just laughed with everyone else. *(Removes hat.)*

DEVON: *(Puts on a different hat.)* The morning of my worst day, I was so excited: a big-name talent scout was having open auditions at the mall. My entire life, there's nothing I've wanted more than to be on TV. I'd spent months preparing a song and dance routine and practicing my smile in the mirror. Even when Mom asked me to babysit my obnoxious little sister on audition day, I was undeterred. I'd just got my driver's license, and I could take Anna along with me. We waited in line for two hours, Anna whining the whole time, until finally it was my turn. I told her to sit still for sixty seconds while I went into the audition room. Sixty seconds! When I came back out,

know what she was doing? She was mimicking my choreographed routine in front of the entire line! Everyone was staring, including the talent scout's assistant. He said, "Ma'am, I think we've found what we're looking for." Sure enough, a month later, Anna's the star of a cereal commercial and a local celebrity. Mom and Dad threw her a big barbeque, she got her picture in the school paper, and her smarmy little face is on TV eating Trix every night. I can't even watch my favorite shows anymore. Oh yeah, and guess who got to drive her into the city for filming? *(Points at self.)* This girl. *(Removes hat.)*

KELSEY: *(Puts on a different hat.)* Last October I got the flu and missed two days of school. On the third day, I felt better but I planned to stay home again because there was a movie on TV that I wanted to see. I didn't take a shower or wash my hair because I wanted to look as wretched as possible so Mom would let me stay in bed. I even wore my worst old clothes, but Mom didn't buy it. She just said, "I'll drive you to school. Let's go," and handed me my excuse. When I took the excuse into the office, the office aide said I was supposed to go to the gym instead of to class. I thought we were having a special program, but when I got there, they were taking our senior class pictures! Mrs. Strictly saw me trying to sneak away and made me come back. Now my picture's in the yearbook for all to see ... me with my greasy uncombed hair and puffy eyes and ratty old T-shirt. Definitely my worst day ever. *(Removes hat.)*

DEVON: *(Puts on a different hat.)* My worst day was a blind date. The guy was a friend of my neighbor, and he called and asked if I'd like to go out to dinner and then to a car show. I'd never had a real date, so I was excited. I bought a new dress and borrowed my

mom's pearls and wore heels. Well, guess where he took me for dinner? A gas station! I had my choice of a corn dog or a stale ham sandwich. We had to eat standing up, and all I could smell was gasoline. The car show was in a field behind the gas station. It had rained, so the field was muddy and I ruined my shoes. Dinner was the worst part, though. When you invite a girl to dinner, is it too much to expect a nice seafood restaurant or one of the Italian or Mexican places? I would have settled for pizza. But a gas station? *(Removes hat. Both KELSEY and DEVON put their original hats back on.)*

KELSEY: This concludes Hapless High School's "Worst Day Ever" contest, so it's time for the audience to vote.

DEVON: All those in favor of cross-country snake, talent scout, and class pictures, say aye.

KELSEY: All those in favor of Miss Liberty, April fool, and gas station dinner, say aye.

DEVON: It's too close to call. In recognition of all six contestants' truly terrible days, you're all winners!

34. Mall Survey

Cast: JAMIE and DREW
Setting: A shopping mall. No special set required.
Props: Clipboard and pen for Jamie.

(As scene opens, JAMIE stands Center Stage holding a clipboard and pen. DREW enters, walking briskly. As DREW approaches, JAMIE speaks.)

JAMIE: Excuse me. I'm taking a survey. Could you answer a few questions?

DREW: Are you selling something?

JAMIE: No.

DREW: If this is going to turn into a sales pitch, you can save your breath.

JAMIE: It's a survey. We're trying to learn about the shopping preferences of our customers.

DREW: I don't have much time. I need to catch a bus.

JAMIE: I'll be quick. First question: How often do you shop here at Mismatched Mall?

DREW: Never.

JAMIE: You're here now.

DREW: True, but I'm not shopping. *(Holds up empty hands.)* **See? No purchases.**

JAMIE: Oh, I get it. You're window shopping. You're making a mental wish list of all the things you'll buy as soon as you have money.

DREW: I have money now.

JAMIE: You do?

DREW: Yep. I just got paid.

JAMIE: You just got paid, and you're at the mall, but you aren't shopping?

DREW: That's right.

JAMIE: Let's move on to question two. On average, how much do you spend each time you come to Mismatched

Mall? A, Five dollars. B, Twenty dollars. C, One hundred dollars or more.

DREW: None of the above. I already told you, I don't shop here.

JAMIE: *(Reading next question)* If you could win a fifty dollar gift certificate from any store in Mismatched Mall, which one would you choose?

DREW: That's a sneaky question.

JAMIE: It is?

DREW: You're really trying to find out which store people like best.

JAMIE: Just answer the question, please. If you could have a gift certificate from any of the stores in Mismatched Mall, which one would you choose?

DREW: Favorite Foods.

JAMIE: And why would you prefer Favorite Foods?

DREW: They sell food, which I can use. The other stores don't sell anything I need.

JAMIE: There are lots of clothing stores in Mismatched Mall. You wear clothes. Everyone needs clothes.

DREW: I don't need designer jeans for two hundred and fifty dollars a pair.

JAMIE: The jeans you're wearing seem nice. That's a cool shirt, too.

DREW: Thanks.

JAMIE: Do you mind telling me where you bought them?

DREW: Value Village.

JAMIE: That's a thrift shop. Do you always buy secondhand clothes?

DREW: Always. I paid four dollars for the jeans and one-fifty for the shirt.

JAMIE: Wow! Good finds.

DREW: Look, it's been nice chatting with you, but I really need to catch my bus.

JAMIE: I'm almost finished. What time do you usually

arrive when you come to Mismatched Mall?
DREW: Five a.m.
JAMIE: The mall doesn't open until ten.
DREW: Well, I come at five.
JAMIE: Are you one of the mall walkers? Those people who come before the shops open and walk around to get their exercise?
DREW: Nope.
JAMIE: What do you do here at five o'clock in the morning?
DREW: Is that question on your survey?
JAMIE: No, I'm just curious.
DREW: I wash windows. I also clean the bathrooms. Lucky me.
JAMIE: Oh! You *work* at Mismatched Mall.
DREW: You got it.
JAMIE: But you don't shop here? That doesn't seem very loyal.
DREW: By the time I get off work, I can't wait to get out of here.
JAMIE: Well, thanks for taking the survey.
DREW: I have one question for you.
JAMIE: OK.
DREW: Do you shop at Mismatched Mall?
JAMIE: Never. I'm only here because they hired me to ask people to take this survey. *(DREW nods, then starts to walk away.)*
JAMIE: Wait! I need to know one more thing.
DREW: *(Pauses.)* **What now?**
JAMIE: Where's that Value Village? I need some new jeans.

35. Pick Me Up at Eight

Cast: JOEL and ELENORE

Setting: A French restaurant. A table with two chairs placed across from each other is Center Stage.

Props: Two papers to serve as menus. A flower for Joel. A purse for Elenore.

Costume: Both players should dress in date attire.

(As scene opens, JOEL is standing to one side of the stage holding the flower. ELENORE enters holding purse and looking around uncertainly. JOEL watches her, looks away, looks back, begins to approach her, and stops a few steps away.)

JOEL: Are you ... Elenore?

ELENORE: Yes! Joel?

JOEL: Yes. Nice to meet you.

ELENORE: Nice to meet you too.

JOEL: *(Handing ELENORE the flower)* **I brought you this flower.**

ELENORE: Oh. Thank you! It's lovely. *(They stand quietly for a second. ELENORE smells the flower.)*

JOEL: Do you want to sit down?

ELENORE: Yes! Definitely.

JOEL: Great. The sign said to take a seat anywhere.

ELENORE: Perfect.

JOEL: Where do you want to sit?

ELENORE: I don't care.

JOEL: By the window? By the wall?

ELENORE: How about by the window?

JOEL: Good choice! *(They walk to the table. JOEL follows ELENORE around the table to pull her seat out for her, but ELENORE has already sat down and scooted in before JOEL gets there. JOEL returns to his own seat and sits.)*

ELENORE: There's a nice breeze here by the window.

JOEL: There certainly is.
ELENORE: The view is good too.
JOEL: I agree. *(They stare at each other for a second before picking up the menus from the table.)*
ELENORE: Have you been to this restaurant before?
JOEL: No. Never. It got good reviews online, and I remembered you said you liked French food.
ELENORE: Mmmmm.
JOEL: The vichyssoise is supposed to be very good.
ELENORE: Is it? Maybe I'll have that.
JOEL: Would you like something to drink?
ELENORE: Just water is great.
JOEL: That sounds good to me too. I'll flag down the waiter. *(JOEL looks around for a waiter.)*
ELENORE: *(Studying menu)* **The quiche looks delicious. I've always liked quiche.**
JOEL: *(Looking at menu)* **Sounds amazing. With ham and Gruyère and fresh herbs.**
ELENORE: What kind of food do you like?
JOEL: I'll eat anything. But French is one of my favorites, so I'm glad you like it too.
ELENORE: Yes, that's lucky.
JOEL: So Elenore. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
ELENORE: What do you want to know?
JOEL: How did you start online dating?
ELENORE: Some of my friends were doing it. I thought I might as well give it a try.
JOEL: Has it been working out for you?
ELENORE: This is the first date I've been on.
JOEL: Really?
ELENORE: Yes. How's it working out for you?
JOEL: I've been on the site for a couple months now. I haven't really met anyone special yet.
ELENORE: I'm sure you will.
JOEL: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

ELENORE: I have one little sister. How about you?
JOEL: I'm one of three boys.
ELENORE: Wow. Oldest or youngest?
JOEL: Middle child.
ELENORE: That must be fun.
JOEL: It is most of the time. Do you have any hobbies?
ELENORE: I like to dance. And knit.
JOEL: Who do you knit for?
ELENORE: My family and friends, mostly. Sometimes I knit hats and donate them or sell them at craft fairs.
JOEL: That sounds like it takes talent.
ELENORE: It's not so hard.
JOEL: I'm terrible with crafts.
ELENORE: What do you like to do?
JOEL: I enjoy waterskiing and hiking.
ELENORE: Is that right?
JOEL: Yep. I picked up waterskiing a few years ago, and I've always loved to hike.
ELENORE: Very cool.
JOEL: I wonder where the waiter is.
ELENORE: Maybe we should have waited for someone to seat us.
JOEL: The sign definitely says to seat yourself.
ELENORE: Maybe they forgot to change it when they got busy.
JOEL: Maybe. *(Looks around for waiter.)* **Excuse me!** *("Waiter" passes them by.)* **So what kind of French food do you like?**
ELENORE: I like quiche.
JOEL: That's right. You said that. *(ELENORE and JOEL look awkwardly at each other for a long moment.)* **OK, can we just admit that this is awkward?**
ELENORE: So awkward!
JOEL: Why did we decide to go on a date? We've only messaged like three times.

ELENORE: I don't know! This was your idea.
JOEL: You looked cute! I thought I'd give it a shot.
ELENORE: I *looked* cute? As in only in my profile photos?
JOEL: No! You *are* cute. But I'm so nervous I can't think of anything clever to say.
ELENORE: Better than me. I can't think of anything to say at all.
JOEL: And to top it off, the waiter won't even come over to distract us.
ELENORE: I really think you read the sign wrong. They're probably ignoring us because we weren't supposed to seat ourselves. French restaurants are so snooty.
JOEL: But you like French restaurants! That's pretty much the only thing I remember from our messages.
ELENORE: I don't, actually.
JOEL: You don't? But you said –
ELENORE: I couldn't think of anything that sounded better in the message.
JOEL: Elenore! Why didn't you just say what you actually like to eat?
ELENORE: I wanted to seem sophisticated.
JOEL: What do you really like?
ELENORE: Pizza. Burgers. Chinese take-out.
JOEL: Well, I hate French food. Pizza would have been way better. Do you actually dance and knit hats?
ELENORE: Yeah, I do dance. And I've knit like four hats, but it's not my favorite thing to do.
JOEL: What is?
ELENORE: I play cribbage.
JOEL: No way!
ELENORE: You know the game?
JOEL: I love cribbage! I didn't say that in my profile, because everyone always calls it a grandma game. That would have been a way better date.
ELENORE: Joel. I have a cribbage board in my purse.

Should we play?

JOEL: Will they care if we start playing cribbage on the table? This place is kind of fancy.

ELENORE: Forget this place. Let's go get pizza.

JOEL: What, just get up and leave?

ELENORE: Yes! The waiter hasn't even brought us water. It might be another hour.

JOEL: I don't want to seem rude.

ELENORE: Do you want pizza or not?

JOEL: Yes, I want pizza.

ELENORE: And cribbage?

JOEL: Yes to cribbage.

ELENORE: We'll sneak out. They'll never notice. *(She stands up.)* **And if they notice, who cares?**

JOEL: You're right. Not me.

ELENORE: That's the spirit. Come on.

JOEL: *(Standing up and looking around)* **But do try to look incognito.**

ELENORE: *(Laughs.)* **Joel! Didn't we just establish that we didn't care?**

JOEL: Quick! They're not looking! Let's go! *(ELENORE and JOEL hurry off the stage.)*

36. Clever Cat, Devoted Dog

Cast: DOG and CAT
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None
Costumes: Dog and cat attire optional.

CAT: I am Cat! I rule my domain.
DOG: I am Dog. Everyone tells me what to do.
CAT: Nobody bosses me.
DOG: They tell me, "Sit! Stay!"
CAT: I am independent.
DOG: "Shake hands! Heel!" I understand all their commands.
CAT: I am king *(Or queen)* **of the world. My ancestors were royalty. The Egyptian goddess of love had the head of a cat.**
DOG: I am a descendent of the grey wolf. That's why I turn in circles before I lie down. Wolves in the wild trample tall vegetation to use for their beds. Circling also helps determine which direction the wind is blowing. A wolf-descendant prefers to sleep with his nose to the wind.
CAT: Is that why you like to hang your head out the car window?
DOG: Yes! Nose to the wind! Ears flapping! I love car rides.
CAT: I hate car rides. If I could, I would bite the driver and claw the upholstery and jump out the window. I can't because they stuff me in a carrier. The only place the car ever goes is to the vet.
DOG: Sometimes we go to the dog park.
CAT: Oh, how awful! A dog park would be even worse than the vet.
DOG: Don't you ever go to a cat park?
CAT: There are no cat parks. No self-respecting cat would

want to play at a cat park.

DOG: At the dog park, my person throws a ball for me. I run to get it and carry it back to him.

CAT: How demeaning. If my person wants a ball, he can go get it himself.

DOG: Are you always this cranky?

CAT: I'm not cranky. I am Boss of the Universe. Nobody tells me what to do.

DOG: When I bring back the ball, I get praised. I am ecstatic when they say, "Good dog." Sometimes I get treats. I like being with my people.

CAT: Cats have lived with people for more than ten thousand years. Scientists found an ancient cat cemetery in Tunisia with more than three hundred thousand cat mummies.

DOG: Archeologists in Peru found an ancient cemetery where dog skeletons were lovingly wrapped in llama-wool blankets with fish bones next to their noses.

CAT: Fish bones?

DOG: The Peruvians loved their dogs so much that they made sure the dogs would have food in the afterlife.

CAT: If I need to, I can catch my own food.

DOG: I know how to point at birds and deer to help my person see them. I can retrieve a duck or a pheasant.

CAT: Point? Retrieve? Bah! I do the whole business by myself. I am a mighty hunter, stalking my prey alone.

DOG: Well-trained dogs like me make perfect pets.

CAT: Cats are the most popular house pet of all. There are ninety million pet cats.

DOG: Maybe cats are popular because they catch their own food. Pet food is expensive, but mice are free.

CAT: Or maybe it's because humans admire our independent spirit. Dogs are too subservient.

DOG: I am not subservient.

CAT: Sit! *(DOG sits on the floor.)*

CAT: Shake hands! *(DOG and CAT shake hands.)*
CAT: *(Walks a couple of steps to one side.)* **Heel!** *(DOG jumps up and walks right behind CAT.)*
CAT: Not subservient, huh?
DOG: I'm not subservient. I'm loyal. I obey because I want to please.
CAT: I want to please too. I want to please myself. I do let them feed me, though.
DOG: When it's supper time, I let them know. I sit by my bowl and stare at my people. I plead with my eyes.
CAT: I complain loudly if my bowl is empty. If they don't listen, I scratch the furniture.
DOG: I eat whatever is in my bowl. Also anything that's dropped on the floor. Also anything I find in the yard. If you leave a sandwich where I can reach it, don't expect it to be there when you come back.
CAT: My people know which brand of cat food I like. The expensive kind. And it needs to be fresh. If I don't happen to be hungry when it's put in my bowl I will ignore it. Two hours later, when it's dried up, I complain until it's thrown out and fresh food is offered. My people are well trained.
DOG: When my people come home, I wiggle and wag. I do my happy hops, even if they've only been gone for five minutes.
CAT: When my people have been out, I pretend not to notice when they return.
DOG: If someone calls my name, I run to them. I am a good dog. Good, good dog.
CAT: If they call me, I pretend not to hear. I've been known to sit on a closet shelf for more than an hour while everyone searches for me. "Here, kitty," they say. "Here, kitty kitty." They look under the beds. They look in the clothes hamper. They panic that I might have slipped unnoticed out the door, so they walk all

around the neighborhood, calling my name. They don't find me until I decide to emerge. I am a clever cat. Clever, clever cat.

DOG: My people take me for walks. I prance in circles when I see my leash. I know the words "walk" and "out" and "let's go."

CAT: Try to put a harness on me, and you will have shredded arms.

DOG: I would never fight with my family. I am loved. I get petted and hugged. I even get kissed, unless I've just eaten something gross that I found outside. I show my pleasure by wagging my tail and dancing.

CAT: When I am full and sleepy, if someone offers me their lap, I will jump up. I curl my tail around my chin and purr my pleasure.

DOG: Everyone smiles at my doggie dance.

CAT: Everyone smiles at my kitty lullaby.

DOG: *(Together with CAT)* I like being a dog.

CAT: *(Together with DOG)* I like being a cat.

37. That's How Rumors Start

Cast: ONE and TWO. Both players play multiple roles. One plays Molly, Lena, Steph, Ruby, Libby, and then Molly again. Two plays Amy, Katie, Kristie, Sunni, and then Amy again.

Setting: A school hallway. A curtain, screen, or some other divider is mid-stage: players will walk behind this divider to indicate a change in character.

Props: Cell phone for One and pen, paper, and cell phone for Two, all kept in pockets.

ONE: Hey, Amy. Can I tell you a secret?
TWO: Hey, Molly! Of course. What's up?
ONE: I'm trying out for the school play!
TWO: No way! What play?
ONE: *Chicago!* I'm so nervous. I've never tried out for anything. But when I saw that we were putting on *Chicago,* I knew I had to go for it. It's my favorite musical in the world. I'm only trying out for a tiny role, so it's not a big deal. You're the only person I've even said anything to.
TWO: You're going to do so great! When are the auditions?
ONE: Right now! I've got to hurry. I don't want to be late. Wish me luck!
TWO: Not luck, remember? Break a leg! *(ONE waves at TWO, walks behind divider to the right, and re-emerges from the left.)*
ONE: Was that Molly? What's she running off for?
TWO: Oh, hey Lena. She's headed to auditions for the school play, *Chicago.* I think she was kind of keeping it a secret, but it's probably fine for you to know. You're going to find out soon enough anyway. She's trying out right now, and I'm sure she'll get the part.

ONE: We're putting on *Chicago?* I wish I'd known ahead of time, I would have auditioned myself. I'd love to star in *Chicago.* But I'm sure Molly will be great. *(TWO walks behind divider to the right and re-emerges from the left.)* **Katie! Did you know the school was putting on *Chicago?***

TWO: No. Why?

ONE: Just curious. I didn't hear about it. But I think Molly's trying out.

TWO: I didn't know she acted.

ONE: I didn't either, but I can totally see her being the star.

TWO: Yeah, I could see that. Cool! *(ONE walks behind divider to the right and re-emerges from the left.)* **Steph! Guess what? Apparently Molly is going to be the star of *Chicago!***

ONE: Chicago?

TWO: Yeah! Crazy, right?

ONE: That's intense! Does Kristie know?

TWO: I don't know. I just heard it from Lena. *(TWO walks behind divider to the right and re-emerges from the left.)*

ONE: Kristie! Have you heard yet?

TWO: Heard what?

ONE: Molly's going to Chicago to be a big star!

TWO: What?! Since when?

ONE: I think it just happened! Someone must have discovered her as an amazing untapped talent or something.

TWO: Awesome! I've always wanted a friend who's famous.

ONE: Me too. Maybe she can introduce us to Brad Pitt! *(ONE walks behind divider to the right and re-emerges from the left.)*

TWO: Ruby! Molly's gonna be a movie star!

ONE: Excuse me? Our friend Molly?

TWO: Yeah! She just got discovered and she's going to Chicago. Steph said something about Brad Pitt.

ONE: You're kidding. Can she get us tickets to her movie premiere?

TWO: Probably. Anything's possible when you're friends with Brad Pitt. *(TWO walks behind divider to the right and re-emerges from the left.)*

ONE: Sunni! Are you coming to Molly's movie premiere?

TWO: What?

ONE: She's starring in something with Brad Pitt! The premiere's in Chicago, and I think he can get us all tickets!

TWO: I hope I'm invited! When is it?

ONE: I don't know, but I'm going to save every weekend in the near future.

TWO: Me too! Has anyone told Libby? I'm supposed to go camping with her family next weekend, but I think she'd agree this takes precedence. Especially if Brad Pitt's buying the tickets! *(ONE walks behind divider to the right and re-emerges from the left.)*

TWO: Libby! Have you told your mom we might have to postpone the camping trip?

ONE: Why would we do that?

TWO: We don't want to risk missing Molly's movie premiere! Brad Pitt's getting us all VIP tickets!

ONE: Sunni, what are you saying?

TWO: Molly's in a movie! With Brad Pitt! She's like his protégé. And he can get everyone tickets! I just heard all this from Ruby.

ONE: Who did Ruby hear it from?

TWO: I have no idea, but I'm glad she told us in time to reschedule camping. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity!

ONE: This definitely takes precedence over camping. I'll call my mom right now.

TWO: I'll go pack! Just in case! *(TWO walks behind divider to the right.)*

ONE: *(Takes out her phone and pretends to dial.)* **Hey, Mom! We can't do camping this weekend! Molly invited me and Sunni to her movie premiere with Brad Pitt! All expenses paid!** *(Pauses.)* **Mom. We definitely don't have to pay Brad Pitt back. He's like a bazillionaire. I bet he's just happy to do this for his protégé's friends, you know?** *(Pauses.)* **No, Sunni didn't say the name of the movie, but just bump camping back until I hear the final details from Molly. OK? OK, thanks. Love you. Bye!** *(ONE walks behind divider to the right.)*

TWO: *(Re-emerges from behind divider from the right, takes phone out of pocket Center Stage.)* **Hello, this is Amy. Mom? Slow down, I can't understand a word you're saying. Wait, Libby's mom said that? Are you sure?** *(Pauses.)* **Wait, Brad Pitt discovered her? But I just saw her twenty minutes ago! Is he at our school?!** *(Pauses.)* **I don't know if the whole school's going! This is the first I've heard about this! Mom, I've got to call you back. Maybe I can catch Brad Pitt and Molly in the auditorium!** *(Hangs up phone and starts toward divider, right.)*

ONE: *(Re-enters from behind divider from the right.)* **Amy! I think I got the –**

TWO: Molly! I can't believe this! Is Brad Pitt in the auditorium now? How did you ever score a movie deal that fast? You told me you were trying out for a tiny role! I can come to the premiere, can't I? *(Yanking pen and paper from her pocket)* **Can I have Brad's autograph? Wait ... can I have *your* autograph?** *(Holds pen and paper out to ONE. ONE stares at TWO and the pen and paper, and then turns slowly to look at the audience in disbelief.)*

38. Teen Reading Club

Cast: AMARI and QUINN
Setting: Quinn's house. One chair is Center Stage.
Props: A chair and a book

(As scene opens, QUINN is seated, reading the book. AMARI enters.)

AMARI: What are you doing?

QUINN: What does it look like I'm doing? I'm reading.

AMARI: Do you want to play tennis? Or go get milkshakes?

QUINN: No thanks.

AMARI: I have the car.

QUINN: Shhhh. Don't bother me.

AMARI: It's sunny and warm outside. We could take inner tubes to the creek and float downstream.

QUINN: Not today. This is a really good book. I want to keep reading.

AMARI: It's a perfect day for being on the water. I have a cooler with soft drinks and a new tube of sunscreen. All you have to do is put on your swimsuit. *(QUINN continues to read.)* **Hello? Anybody home? I'm talking to you.**

QUINN: I've noticed, and I wish you would stop.

AMARI: What are you reading that's so interesting?

QUINN: It's a novel set in ancient Egypt.

AMARI: Come on! If you don't want to go inner tubing, we can go out to the state park and play Frisbee or badminton.

QUINN: The main character is a modern-day girl who accidentally traveled back in time. Now she's living in the Pharaoh's palace and trying to get back to her own century.

AMARI: You can read when we get home. We won't be late, because I need to have the car back home by six-thirty.

You'll have all evening to finish your book.

QUINN: Would you please go away? I'll go to the park with you another time.

AMARI: How many pages does your book have?

QUINN: I don't know. What difference does it make?

AMARI: I signed up for the Teen Reading Club this summer. I have to read ten books to qualify for a prize, but the books don't count unless they have at least fifty pages.

QUINN: Fifty isn't very many pages. *(Flips to end of book.)* This one has two hundred fourteen pages.

AMARI: No kidding? Why would you choose such a long book? I can read four books in the time it will take you to read that one.

QUINN: This is a good story. I wish it would last forever.

AMARI: I already have six titles on the list of books I've read for the Teen Reading Club.

QUINN: Be quiet. I only have three more chapters, and I want to find out what happens. The protagonist has to taste the food before it gets served to the Pharaoh, and I'm afraid she might get poisoned. It's exciting.

AMARI: I want to read ten because the second prize is a pizza party.

QUINN: You don't want the first prize?

AMARI: First prize is an e-reader.

QUINN: I know.

AMARI: The books I've read so far were all boring, and I figure they'll be just as boring on an e-reader.

QUINN: They're probably boring because you choose babyish books with hardly any pages just so you can read them quickly and write them on your list. The best book I read last summer was *War and Peace,* which has about six zillion pages.

AMARI: I may drop out of the Teen Reading Club.

QUINN: Good. More prizes for the rest of us.

AMARI: You're in the Teen Reading Club too?
QUINN: Yes. I do it every summer.
AMARI: Is that why you're reading instead of having fun?
QUINN: I am having fun, or I would be if you would leave me alone and let me finish my book.
AMARI: So when you're done reading that book, you'll add it to your list?
QUINN: Sure. Although I would read it anyway, even if I hadn't signed up for Teen Reading Club.
AMARI: How many books are on your list so far? Are you getting close to ten?
QUINN: I've already read way more than ten. I think this one is number twenty-eight.
AMARI: If you already have ten books on your list, why are you still reading?
QUINN: I *like* to read! Last summer I read forty-two books, and I want to beat my own record this year.
AMARI: Forty-two? You actually read forty-two books in one summer?
QUINN: Yep. It would have been forty-three, but my parents made me leave my book at home while we went to my aunt's birthday party.
AMARI: But you only have to read ten to qualify for the prize drawing.
QUINN: I am aware of the rules.
AMARI: You read thirty-two books that you would not have had to read! You could have stopped at ten and still won a prize because the prizes are given randomly. All the names of people who read at least ten books get put in a bowl and names are drawn to see who wins. I have just as good a chance with ten books as you had with forty-two.
QUINN: The purpose of the Teen Reading Club is not to win prizes.
AMARI: It is for me.

QUINN: Fine. I hope you win something.
AMARI: Did you win a prize last year?
QUINN: Yes. I won a really cool blank book.
AMARI: Blank? No words at all?
QUINN: That's right.
AMARI: Does it have more than fifty pages? I could read that in a hurry.
QUINN: It isn't a book to read. It's a journal.
AMARI: Oh. I hope I don't win one of those. I don't like to write. Writing is even harder than reading.
QUINN: I hope you don't win one, either. It would be a waste of a perfectly good journal. I'd like another one, though. Mine from last year is already full.
AMARI: Full of what?
QUINN: Mostly poems that I wrote and quotations that I liked so much that I copied them into the journal.
AMARI: I don't want a journal, but a pizza party would be cool. Do you want to win that?
QUINN: I'd rather win the e-reader, although I still prefer real books with pages. *(Starts reading again.)*
AMARI: I guess you don't want to go to the park. *(QUINN continues reading.)* **I guess you're going to keep your nose in that book.** *(QUINN continues reading.)* **You are really going to waste a beautiful day by reading.**
QUINN: And you are really going to waste a beautiful life by *not* reading. *(AMARI exits. QUINN continues to read.)*

39. Hair Salon Gossip

Cast: STYLIST and CUSTOMER

Setting: A hair salon. A chair is Center Stage facing the audience. A small table is set to one side of the chair.

Props: A cloth or towel to wrap around Customer is draped over the back of the chair. A hand mirror, comb, hair dryer, and two hair clips are on table. The authors recommend that scissors be pantomimed.

Costume: Customer should have long hair (a wig may be used).

(As scene opens, STYLIST enters followed by CUSTOMER.)

STYLIST: Come on back, honey. Have a seat. *(Removes cloth from back of chair and waits for CUSTOMER to be seated.)*

CUSTOMER: *(Sits.)* **Thanks.**

STYLIST: *(Drapes cloth around CUSTOMER's shoulders and clips it in place using a hair clip.)* **It's been a long time since you were in.**

CUSTOMER: Almost a year.

STYLIST: A whole year!

CUSTOMER: I know. I have tons of split ends. I've been meaning to come in forever.

STYLIST: *(Stands behind CUSTOMER and looks forward as if both are facing a mirror.)* **Well, we'll fix that. What are we doing today? Cut? Color? Style?**

CUSTOMER: Just a trim, please.

STYLIST: *(Arranging CUSTOMER's hair.)* **You would look great with a little brown in your hair. Just a few shades darker.**

CUSTOMER: That's OK. I just want a couple inches off, and some layers.

STYLIST: How about bangs? *(Folds a lock of hair over*

CUSTOMER's forehead to look like bangs.)

CUSTOMER: I don't know. I've had bangs before. They drive me crazy, and then I have to wait months for them to grow out.

STYLIST: Well, you can think about it while I get started. *(Begins to comb hair.)* **Tell me what's new with you, honey.**

CUSTOMER: Nothing much. Just going to school. Working. Hanging out with friends.

STYLIST: Did you get that job you told me about last time?

CUSTOMER: Which one?

STYLIST: You were applying to work at some restaurant.

CUSTOMER: Oh, that was ages ago. I'm a barista now.

STYLIST: Ah. Good for you! And how's school?

CUSTOMER: Good. I like my classes this semester.

STYLIST: That's wonderful! *(Begins parting CUSTOMER's hair.)*

CUSTOMER: How's your family?

STYLIST: They're doing very well. Mia's almost three. There she is, right there. *(Points forward as if indicating a photo by the mirror.)* **That picture was taken on the first day of gymnastics class. Isn't she darling?**

CUSTOMER: She's beautiful.

STYLIST: Thank you! Yes, family life is good. *(Pauses and narrows eyes suddenly.)* **My sister's family, on the other hand –**

CUSTOMER: *(As if comb has caught a knot)* **Ow!**

STYLIST: Sorry, honey. I just get so mad when I think of my brother-in-law right now. *(Sets down comb and picks up clip.)*

CUSTOMER: What do you mean? What happened?

STYLIST: Well, did I tell you the last time you were in that my sister was engaged? *(Clips left side of hair at an odd angle.)*

CUSTOMER: Yeah, I think I remember you saying something about that. You didn't like the guy, right?

STYLIST: No one did! My whole family was against it from the start.

CUSTOMER: But she married him anyway?

STYLIST: Six months ago. They eloped to Las Vegas. *(Draws hair out as far as it extends above CUSTOMER's head and considers it. Pretends to pick up scissors from side table.)*

CUSTOMER: What?!

STYLIST: That's right. They'd barely known each other three months. And they'd set a date for next June. But they decided they couldn't wait. We all thought she was pregnant. *(Pretends to snip hair. Begins to repeat this process.)*

CUSTOMER: I thought your sister already had kids. Aren't you an aunt?

STYLIST: She has two kids from her first marriage. Doesn't make the best choices, my sister.

CUSTOMER: So what happened?

STYLIST: Well, they moved in together. Her kids plus the two of them in a two-bedroom townhouse. He didn't make a very steady income, this guy. He called himself a professional online gambler.

CUSTOMER: Can you make those layers a little shorter?

STYLIST: Sure thing, honey. *(Holds chunk of hair out and makes as if to cut it a few inches from CUSTOMER's head.)* **Anyway, like I was saying –**

CUSTOMER: Wait, not that short!

STYLIST: *(Repositions scissors.)* **How about here?**

CUSTOMER: That's good.

STYLIST: *(Snips and continues to repeat the process.)* **Anyway, like I was saying, they moved in together. But he was always glued to his computer. He wasn't making any money, so she had to pick up extra hours**

at work. She thought he would at least be able to take care of the kids while she was away, but he said he couldn't have his attention diverted. So she hired a nanny too. It was all very costly for my sister.

CUSTOMER: I can imagine. Why didn't she make her husband find a real job?

STYLIST: Well, she should have. But she was way too easy on him. There she was working all those extra hours, and he was at home gambling away her money online. *(Removes clip from left side of hair and clips right side. Begins to cut.)*

CUSTOMER: That's terrible.

STYLIST: Oh, that's not all. About a month ago, my sister started to get weird vibes from the nanny. The woman was suddenly offering to work on the weekends too, so my sister could go to the gym, or spa, or grocery store. My sister had always taken the kids along on errands so she wouldn't have to pay the nanny for more hours, and suddenly the woman was all eager to work overtime.

CUSTOMER: Maybe she just needed the money. Nannies don't make very much, right?

STYLIST: Well, that's what my sister told herself. Still, she was uneasy. After two weeks of suspicion, my sister made up her mind to fire the nanny. Did you decide about the bangs?

CUSTOMER: Oh. Uh, what do you think?

STYLIST: They'll frame your face beautifully.

CUSTOMER: OK, I guess. If you really think they'll look good. *(STYLIST pretends to cut bangs, and then picks up hairdryer.)*

CUSTOMER: So, what happened with your sister and the nanny?

STYLIST: Oh, yes! *(Pauses with the hairdryer.)* Oh, there was so much drama. So I told you my sister was going

to fire the nanny? Well, she made the mistake of talking to her husband about it the night before she was going to do it.

CUSTOMER: And what did he say?

STYLIST: *(Pantomimes turning the dryer on and begins drying hair.)* **Nothing! But the next morning –**

CUSTOMER: *(Loudly)* ***What? I can't hear you over the hairdryer!***

STYLIST: *(Loudly)* ***The next morning my sister woke up to find my brother-in-law gone and a note saying he'd run away with the nanny!*** *(Turns dryer off.)*

CUSTOMER: What was that last part?

STYLIST: Her husband ran away with the nanny!

CUSTOMER: You're joking! They'd been having an affair all along?

STYLIST: *(Shrugs.)* **Guess so. Serves her right for eloping with an online gambler, I suppose. Now she's right back where she started, except she lost all her money.** *(Sets dryer down and looks hair over.)* **What do you think?**

CUSTOMER: I think that's despicable.

STYLIST: *(Picking up hand mirror)* **It certainly is. But what do you think of your hair?** *(Holds mirror behind CUSTOMER's head.)*

CUSTOMER: Oh! Looks good to me. Thanks.

STYLIST: *(Sets hand mirror down and takes cloth from around CUSTOMER's shoulders.)* **I'm glad you like it.**

CUSTOMER: *(Stands and runs fingers through hair, taking one more look toward audience/mirror.)* **What do I owe you?**

STYLIST: Come on. I'll ring you up at the front desk. *(Starts walking toward exit.)*

CUSTOMER: *(Follows STYLIST toward exit.)* **So what's going to happen to your sister now?** *(They exit.)*

40. Adoption Day

Cast: SANDY and TEAGAN
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None

TEAGAN: Sandy! Congratulations! I just heard the news.
SANDY: What news is that?
TEAGAN: I saw your sister at the mini-mart, and she told me about the new addition to your family. That is so exciting. I'm thrilled for you!
SANDY: Oh. Yeah, it's great. We're picking him up tomorrow.
TEAGAN: I had no idea your parents were considering such a thing. Why didn't you ever mention it?
SANDY: I thought they were never actually going to say yes, but they finally changed their minds. Julie and I have begged them to do this for years, and they always had some excuse not to.
TEAGAN: Whatever happened that changed their minds, I'm really glad for all of you. I was in a hurry when I saw Julie, so I didn't get any details. How old is he?
SANDY: About six months.
TEAGAN: About? Don't you know his birthday for sure?
SANDY: No. He came from an abusive situation, and we don't have a whole lot of information on his background.
TEAGAN: That is the most unselfish thing I've ever heard of. I really admire you and your parents. Imagine! Adopting him when you don't even know his birthday.
SANDY: I don't think it's all that uncommon, actually. When my cousin's family adopted Susie, they didn't have a clue how old she was.
TEAGAN: How long ago was that?
SANDY: Let's see. I was seven then, so it's been ten years. I remember being really jealous when they brought

Susie home.
TEAGAN: And it's worked out OK?
SANDY: Sure. Susie's great. Everyone adores her.
TEAGAN: Have you chosen his name? Or do you have to keep the name he had?
SANDY: We get to choose. We decided to call him Rufus.
TEAGAN: Rufus? You're kidding, aren't you? You didn't really name him Rufus.
SANDY: That's the name he had, and we thought it would be easier for him if we kept it. As it is, he has to get used to a new home and new people. We thought a new name might be too much.
TEAGAN: At age six months, I don't think it would matter. Being called Rufus would take some getting used to at any age.
SANDY: I like Rufus, and we can always change it in a couple of weeks if we decide Rufus doesn't seem to fit him.
TEAGAN: But by then you'll have told everyone his name. Are you going to send out announcements?
SANDY: Uh, no. No announcements.
TEAGAN: Did you adopt him privately – from an individual? Or did your parents go through some kind of an agency?
SANDY: An agency. They said that was the only way they'd consider doing it.
TEAGAN: So you didn't meet Rufus's mother or father.
SANDY: Nope.
TEAGAN: Did you see pictures of them?
SANDY: Why would we do that?
TEAGAN: I would think you'd want to know what they look like, so you'd have some idea of what Rufus will look like when he's older.
SANDY: He's adorable. I only saw him for about half an hour, but I love him already, and I'm sure we'll all

love him even more after he's lived with us for a while. I can't wait to bring him home tomorrow.

TEAGAN: Was it terribly expensive?

SANDY: Not too bad. I think it was about one hundred and fifty dollars, and that included all his vaccinations and the surgery.

TEAGAN: Surgery! What surgery? Does he have some kind of deformity? Is Rufus going to be handicapped all his life? Is that why he was available for adoption?

SANDY: No! He's perfectly healthy. He had to be neutered, and the adoption fee covered that charge. That's why we didn't take him home yesterday as soon as we chose him. He's getting neutered today and can go home tomorrow.

TEAGAN: Neutered? As in, making sure he can never be a father?

SANDY: Right.

TEAGAN: That is shocking! Why in the world would you do that?

SANDY: Because there are too many unwanted dogs in the world, and we don't want Rufus to be responsible for producing more of them. You should have seen that place! Cage after cage of dogs who need homes. Good dogs, nice dogs. All of them sad-eyed and hopeful. It was heartbreaking.

TEAGAN: Rufus is a dog?

SANDY: What did you think he was?

TEAGAN: A baby! I've been all excited because I thought you were getting a little brother.

SANDY: Is that what Julie told you?

TEAGAN: No. Now that I think back, I overheard her telling someone else that he had dark, curly hair. I asked who she was talking about, and she said the new little sweetie that you guys were adopting. I guess I sort of jumped to the wrong conclusion.

SANDY: That's for sure! A baby!
TEAGAN: I think we need to start this conversation over. Where did you get him?
SANDY: From the county Humane Society.
TEAGAN: What kind of dog is he?
SANDY: A mixed breed.
TEAGAN: That's the best kind. They have fewer health problems than purebreds.
SANDY: We think he's part toy poodle, part cairn terrier, and part who-knows-what. He's cute and very friendly. You'll have to come over to meet him.
TEAGAN: I'd like that. You're really lucky, you know that? I've begged my parents for a dog since I was four years old, and I still don't have one.
SANDY: Don't give up. Sometimes if you keep asking, you wear them down. You might catch your parents in a weak moment, and they'll surprise you by saying yes.
TEAGAN: I'll keep trying.
SANDY: Tell them that every day in the United States, thousands of healthy dogs get euthanized for no reason except that they have no home. That statistic is what convinced my mom and dad to adopt a shelter dog. Maybe it will work for your family too.
TEAGAN: I hope so. Lucky Rufus.
SANDY: Lucky me.
TEAGAN: Rufus. What a great name for a dog!

41. National Threat

Cast: TSA OFFICER and VACATIONER

Setting: An airport security checkpoint. A long table or row of desks stands between characters and audience.

Props: A plastic bin sits at one end of the table. Vacationer carries a suitcase with a small bottle of shampoo and various clothes. Six pennies are in one of Vacationer's smallest shorts pockets. A wand and a walkie-talkie for TSA Officer. (Drumstick, toy light saber, or similar will work for wand; cell phone may replace walkie-talkie.)

Costume: Vacationer wears cargo shorts, flip-flops, and a watch. TSA Officer wears some sort of uniform.

(As scene opens, TSA OFFICER stands Center Stage angled toward where VACATIONER waits, presumably at the front of a security line. TSA OFFICER has wand in his pocket/belt loop. VACATIONER checks his watch.)

TSA OFFICER: Next.

VACATIONER: Through here?

TSA OFFICER: Hold it, sir. You need to remove your shoes and place them in the plastic bin.

VACATIONER: Flip-flops aren't OK?

TSA OFFICER: Sir, I'm going to need your cooperation on this. There's a long line of folks behind you.

VACATIONER: I'm sorry. I just thought they'd be fine. *(Removes shoes and places them in bin.)* **There we go.** *(Begins to walk forward.)*

TSA OFFICER: *(Holds up hand to stop VACATIONER.)* **And the contents of your pockets.**

VACATIONER: I don't have anything in them.

TSA OFFICER: Sir, I'm going to need you to empty your pockets, please.

VACATIONER: I already did. My phone and wallet are going through. *(Points at table, then sighs. Sets suitcase down*

and turns out pockets.) **There. See?**

TSA OFFICER: And the other ones.

VACATIONER: I never use the other ones.

TSA OFFICER: Then why did I hear jingling coming from one of your pockets? Let's see them all, please.

VACATIONER: *(Begins going through cargo pockets.)* **Look – nothing, nothing, nothing –** *(Finds pennies.)* **Oh.** *(Removes pennies.)*

TSA OFFICER: That's what I thought.

VACATIONER: I'm sorry. I didn't know those were there.

TSA OFFICER: Next time I'd like you to comply more directly.

VACATIONER: Look, it's six pennies. I have no idea what they're from. Here they go. In the bin. *(Puts pennies in bin and slides bin forward across the table.)* **Can I go now?**

TSA OFFICER: Put your suitcase through the scanner first.

VACATIONER: *(Setting suitcase on table)* **That's what I'm doing.**

TSA OFFICER: Sir, I'm not sure I like your attitude. My job is to keep this airport and everybody in it safe, and I intend to do my job correctly. Put your suitcase through the scanner.

VACATIONER: *(Pushes suitcase to slide forward along tabletop behind bin.)* **It's already going! Look! Through the scanner! Can I come through now?**

TSA OFFICER: Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to calm down.

VACATIONER: Excuse me? What part of me is not calm?

TSA OFFICER: *(Holds out hand.)* **Wait right there.**

VACATIONER: I'm waiting.

TSA OFFICER: All right. Walk straight ahead with your arms by your sides.

VACATIONER: Since when is that a rule?

TSA OFFICER: That has been a rule as long as I've worked here. Walk straight ahead.

VACATIONER: *(Begins to walk forward.)* **Why have I never had anyone else ask me to walk with my arms held by my sides? This is getting a little ridiculous. You're already scanning my whole body and everything I own, including the six pennies I found in a remote pocket of my cargo shorts. What do you care where my arms are if you can already see through them?**

TSA OFFICER: Stop right there. What are you carrying that set off the scanner?

VACATIONER: You tell me! Isn't that your job?

TSA OFFICER: Sir, I'm going to need you to step aside with me.

VACATIONER: You've got to be kidding.

TSA OFFICER: Security is not a matter we kid about here. Follow me. *(VACATIONER follows TSA OFFICER a short distance away, past end of table and forward toward audience. VACATIONER stands facing audience. TSA OFFICER takes wand from pocket.)* **Stand with your feet in the mat prints. Arms out.**

VACATIONER: *(Complies.)* **So this is what my tax dollars are being wasted on.**

TSA OFFICER: What was that?

VACATIONER: Nothing.

TSA OFFICER: Do I need to bring someone else over here?

VACATIONER: No. You don't. Just hurry.

TSA OFFICER: I'm not sure you understand. National security is not something we're willing to hurry. Stand still. *(Begins to run wand up side of VACATIONER.)*

VACATIONER: Are you trying to make me miss my flight? Let me guess. United is paying you to hold me up so I have to buy another of their exorbitant tickets.

TSA OFFICER: Why are you in such a rush, sir?

VACATIONER: Like I just said, I'm going to miss my flight, sir.

TSA OFFICER: *(Stops at VACATIONER's hip.)* **Right there. What's that beeping?**

VACATIONER: The button on the pocket of my shorts?

TSA OFFICER: Show me.

VACATIONER: *(Lifts hem of shirt to show top of pants pocket.)* **There it is. I can't take that off to go through security. How often do you stop people because of the button on their shorts? Real efficient system you're running here. Now can I go?**

TSA OFFICER: I'm going to have to take a look at your bag.

VACATIONER: Why? What's wrong with my bag? My bag didn't set off the scanner; I did.

TSA OFFICER: Stay right where you are. *(Points.)* **Is that your bag there?**

VACATIONER: Yes, that's my bag. The one full of stuff for Cancun that I won't get to use at the rate we're going.

TSA OFFICER: I'm going to ask you again. What's your rush?

VACATIONER: I've already told you. You're making me miss my flight. You took a disliking to me as soon as I forgot to take my shoes off, and here you are still trying to prove to me who's boss. That's not the level of maturity I'd expect from someone who's supposed to be serving the public.

TSA OFFICER: *(Walks to bag and begins feeling the outside.)* **Airport guidelines posted on our website clearly indicate to would-be travelers that they must allow three hours from the time of arrival at the airport to boarding time. Even so, we make no guarantees that passengers will reach their gate on time. That's your responsibility, not ours.**

VACATIONER: If everyone followed those guidelines, we'd all end up sitting around the terminal for two and a

half hours every time we fly. Which I'm sure the airport would love since we'd be forced to buy more bland ten-dollar sandwiches. I left more than enough time to make my flight.

TSA OFFICER: Our guidelines are designed to account for situations like this.

VACATIONER: Since when did this become a "situation"?

TSA OFFICER: Come over here and open your bag for me.

VACATIONER: Wait a second. Are you making me open it because you aren't allowed to do it yourself? Because if so, I'm going to politely refuse. You have no reason to go through my bag, and I barely got it closed after three hours of packing last night. There's no way I'll get it repacked if I take it all out here.

TSA OFFICER: Either you open your bag, or I call my manager over and have her do it. I guarantee that the latter will take longer. My manager and I deal with mouth-offs like you every day, and she's got a long line of people to get through before she'd be able to check your bag.

VACATIONER: Or you could just not check my bag.

TSA OFFICER: Your refusal to show me the bag's contents tells me you think you have a reason to hide something. It gives me good cause to search your luggage.

VACATIONER: That's what counts as good cause these days? Asking to do something you don't have reason for, and then using my refusal as reason enough? I may not be a lawyer, but that doesn't seem like it would hold up in court. Regardless, you're giving me no choice, because if I don't give you what you want, you're going to do everything in your power to hold me up until I miss my flight. Here you go. *(Unzips bag.)* Go ahead, throw everything out of it. That's not inconvenient at all.

TSA OFFICER: *(Begins digging through suitcase. Holds up small bottle.)* **Shampoo?**

VACATIONER: Yes. And you'll notice it's less than three ounces. I expect it to last me for about one shower.

TSA OFFICER: *(Tosses a bundle on table and indicates it with his hand.)* **What's this? Your underwear?**

VACATIONER: What are you, the Spanish Inquisition? Yes, that's obviously what that is. Are you done? Find what you needed?

TSA OFFICER: You can pack that back up now.

VACATIONER: Gee, thanks for allowing it.

TSA OFFICER: You're welcome. *(Begins to walk back to original position.)*

VACATIONER: *(Shaking head, begins stuffing things in suitcase. Sarcastically, to self.)* **Glad we got those ten bombs taken care of.**

TSA OFFICER: *(Spins around.)* **What did you just say?**

VACATIONER: Oh, for Pete's sake. I'm being sarcastic. I'm sorry I said anything.

TSA OFFICER: I'll bet you are. *(To walkie-talkie)* **Lisa! I need backup at checkpoint six. We have a situation. I'm detaining a suspicious person now.**

VACATIONER: *(Spreads arms wide in disbelief.)* **Who do you think you're detaining? What is this? I give up my freedom of speech because I tried to walk through the scanner with flip-flops on? You may not appreciate a heated comment, but to suspend my rights over it? What's next? You get to lock me up on suspicions of terrorism because I muttered the word "bomb" in an airport?**

TSA OFFICER: Get your arms behind your back. You're coming with me.

VACATIONER: Get away from me. Where are you taking me?

TSA OFFICER: A temporary detention facility. We'll decide

if we need to pursue further action from there.

VACATIONER: *(Taking a step back from TSA OFFICER)* **And if you decide that you do? Will every word I say – no matter what its obvious intention – be used against me in court? Or don't we do trials in this country anymore?**

TSA OFFICER: *(Roughly grabs VACATIONER's arms and forces them behind his back as if putting him in handcuffs.)* **Come quietly. We don't need a scene.** *(Begins pushing VACATIONER ahead of him toward exit.)*

VACATIONER: *(Being pushed ahead, trying to resist)* **You bet you don't! Someone might notice what abuses of power we've come to accept in the name of national security. Help! Somebody help me!** *(They exit.)*

42. Nummy's Fudge Shop Diet

Cast: MICKEY and BOBBY
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None

MICKEY: Do you want to go to Nummy's Fudge Shop?
BOBBY: No, thanks. I'm on a diet. Starting today, I will eat only small portions of healthy food. No sweets. No potato chips. And absolutely no chocolate.
MICKEY: Chocolate's good for you. Especially dark chocolate.
BOBBY: Not if you're addicted, which I am. One bite of chocolate, and I'm done for. I eat the whole candy bar or every piece in the box. Once I consumed an entire bag of Hershey's Kisses in one sitting. The jumbo size bag.
MICKEY: Whoa. Didn't you get sick?
BOBBY: No, but I got fat.
MICKEY: You are not fat. You're an average size.
BOBBY: I don't want to be average. I want to be skinny. I figure six hundred calories per day should be about right.
MICKEY: Six hundred? That isn't nearly enough. You'll feel starved all day long, and then you won't be able to stick with your eating plan. You'll end up scarfing down more than you would have if you had eaten regular meals.
BOBBY: No way. I am totally psyched for this. I am so ready to diet that I may even fast for a few days.
MICKEY: I don't think that's a good idea.
BOBBY: Why not? The less I eat, the sooner I'll get rid of my fat stomach.
MIKEY: Malnutrition causes big potbellies. Haven't you ever

seen photos of starving children in Africa?

BOBBY: Those are kids who don't get enough to eat for months and months. I'm only going to diet until I've lost ten pounds. Then I'll eat normally again.

MICKEY: And gain it all back.

BOBBY: No! I'll still be really careful about what I eat. If I'm going to suffer through six hundred calories a day, I sure don't plan to gain it back.

MICKEY: Have you talked to your doctor about this?

BOBBY: I don't need to talk to a doctor.

MICKEY: Yes, you do. All the diet books and websites say to consult with your physician before embarking on any weight loss plan.

BOBBY: They just say that in case somebody with a serious health problem decides to go on a crazy diet and it ends up causing a seizure or a heart attack. They're trying to prevent dieters from suing them.

MICKEY: That alone should tell you to go slow. If people sometimes have heart attacks or other serious problems when they don't eat properly, then you need to be careful about how you diet.

BOBBY: I'm not going to starve myself until I keel over. I only want to lose ten pounds so I can fit into the black skirt I bought last year. I never wore it because by the time I had an occasion to, I had gained ten pounds and it no longer fit me. So now I am changing my piggish ways. I am giving up all junk food.

MICKEY: That's a good idea, but you'd better give up watching television too. If you're bombarded with ads for burgers and pizza and sugary cereals, you'll never be able to resist.

BOBBY: Ha! My willpower is mightier than a piece of pizza. Bye-bye, brownies! Farewell, French fries! So long, super-size sodas!

MICKEY: Yeah, right. I give this diet three days. Then

you'll be so hungry, you'll be gobbling everything in sight.

BOBBY: Not me. I am starting a new love affair. I am now in a relationship with salads and steamed vegetables. I click "like" every time I see a piece of asparagus.

MICKEY: That's a good thing. Eat lots of veggies, but get some protein too and some whole grains.

BOBBY: Next month I'll eat protein and grains. After I've lost ten pounds.

MICKEY: You can eat a balanced diet and still lose weight. Hard-boiled eggs are not high in calories. Neither is a piece of broiled salmon. You could sprinkle some garbanzo beans on your salad.

BOBBY: You're just jealous.

MICKEY: What? Why would I be jealous?

BOBBY: You're jealous because if I get skinny, it will make you feel fat.

MICKEY: I do not feel fat. My clothes fit just fine.

BOBBY: What size are those pants?

MICKEY: None of your business.

BOBBY: Ha! That proves my point. If you were wearing size two pants, you would be more than happy to say so.

MICKEY: If I was wearing size two pants, I would still be eight years old.

BOBBY: It's all right. You don't need to feel guilty about being jealous. I used to envy people who were skinny too.

MICKEY: And now you don't?

BOBBY: Now I don't because I have not eaten a single thing so far today. Zero calories! Soon I'll be the thinnest person in our school.

MICKEY: I'd rather be smart or happy. Or both.

BOBBY: You don't get it. It's smart to be skinny.

MICKEY: It's smart to care more about your health than

about some silly fashion trend. I'm happy with how I look. Life is too short not to enjoy it. A good dessert now and then makes me happy.

BOBBY: It makes me happy to be skinny.

MICKEY: OK. If that's how you feel, then good luck with your diet. I hope the pounds disappear quickly.

BOBBY: Thanks.

MICKEY: I need to get going. I'm meeting the gang at Nummy's. We're going to try the new Freaked-out-on-Fudge Milkshakes.

BOBBY: Freaked-out-on-Fudge Milkshakes?

MICKEY: They're made with peppermint ice cream and fudge sauce. I hear they are fabulous. *(Starts to exit.)*

BOBBY: Stop! Those sound unreal.

MICKEY: They're served with whipped cream on top, and you get enough in the shake container to refill your glass a second time.

BOBBY: *(Holds stomach.)* Peppermint ice cream has protein ... whipped cream has calcium ...

MICKEY: See you later. I'm off to get freaked out on fudge. *(Exits.)*

BOBBY: I think I'll start my diet tomorrow. *(Rushes after MICKEY.)* Hey! Wait up!

43. Between Hipsters

Cast: SIDNEY and ROBIN
Setting: Two chairs are Center Stage, facing the audience.
Props: Phone with headphones for Robin. Phone for Sidney.

(As scene opens, ROBIN sits listening to his headphones and paying no attention to SIDNEY sitting next to him. SIDNEY, pretending to text on his phone, glances at ROBIN.)

SIDNEY: What are you listening to?

ROBIN: *(Takes one headphone out.)* **What?**

SIDNEY: I was just wondering what you were listening to.

ROBIN: Oh. It's a pretty niche band. They haven't made it big yet, so you've probably never heard of them.

SIDNEY: I've heard of a lot of bands.

ROBIN: I'm pretty sure you won't know this one.

SIDNEY: Try me.

ROBIN: *(Sighs.)* **They're called The Dosages. They're from Australia, which is probably why you don't know them.**

SIDNEY: Not know The Dosages? I'd have to have been living under a rock to not know the Dosages. I used to like them way back before they sold out. But I find all their new albums to be complete trash.

ROBIN: This isn't a new album; it's from when they first formed the band, before they even called themselves The Dosages.

SIDNEY: You mean when they were Unclean Slate? Those albums are OK in a real pinch. But they mooched all their best hooks off of Benny McKing. For several years I owned an extensive collection of McKing vinyl, and I recognized the similarities the first time I heard them. Of course most people wouldn't, because McKing was very much an unknown in spite of his genius.

ROBIN: McKing a genius? He never wrote a single song. His

brother Billy was the unsung hero behind all of his hits. I would feel dirty owning a McKing record that wasn't one of Billy's.

SIDNEY: You're still listening to records, huh?

ROBIN: *(Holds up phone.)* Apart from this, it's all I own. Tapes and CDs became mainstream so quickly.

SIDNEY: Of course they did, but the same is true of modern vinyl. I used to buy those sorts of records back when I was young and trying to be cool. I broke them all up to use in an installation art project a few years back. I won't listen to music nowadays unless it's on my Victrola.

ROBIN: What's that?

SIDNEY: It's a pre-1929 acoustic phonograph. It only plays laterally-cut 78 RPMs.

ROBIN: Where did you find it?

SIDNEY: At Goodwill, of course. It's the only place I shop. The last time I went to a mall was when I was about twelve.

ROBIN: I can't say I've ever been to a mall. I make all my clothes myself.

SIDNEY: The only thing malls are good for is to watch all the people playing slaves to capitalism. I used to sit in the corner and read Marx just to see if anyone would notice the irony. But I'm guessing they didn't because I was reading the original version, and the title was in German. Marx is so much more eloquent in his native tongue.

ROBIN: Is that right?

SIDNEY: Are you telling me you haven't read *Das Kapital?*

ROBIN: I gave up reading in homage to the high illiteracy rates among my native people. I'm part Cherokee.

SIDNEY: So am I. What fraction?

ROBIN: Well ... I know it's at least one-sixty-fourth. But there's evidence in some recently unearthed family

documents suggesting that I could be as much as one-eighth.

SIDNEY: Who isn't one-sixty-fourth Cherokee? Stop anyone on the street and they'll tell you they're one-sixty-fourth Cherokee. I'm one-sixteenth, but I don't self-identify as Native American, even though I could. I don't need to be pigeonholed by the historical connotations of ethnic labels.

ROBIN: I'm probably one-eighth. Anyway, it's not about a societally imposed number. It's about a connection with the spirit of my people.

SIDNEY: How did you read the family documents if you gave up reading?

ROBIN: My brother translated them to spoken word poetry for me. We communicate best that way.

SIDNEY: You mean he read them aloud for you?

ROBIN: *(Shrugs.)* If that's the way you want to see it. I'm planning to walk the Trail of Tears this summer.

SIDNEY: That's pretty Ameri-centric. Thousands of indigenous peoples are still being marginalized every day. It's why I'm going to work on a farm in the Peruvian Andes this summer. I actually might not come back. Our national culture of conformism is exhausting to my creativity.

ROBIN: Please don't be offended, but I think your desire to volunteer abroad exemplifies a high degree of conformism. Society places value on volunteerism, and you're eating right out of their hands.

SIDNEY: I'll be documenting my experiences through Polaroid photography, to juxtapose the way we remember the past with the way we construct a shared humanity in the present.

ROBIN: That's a coincidence. I dabble in photography myself. Have you ever heard of Constantinopolis?

SIDNEY: No.

ROBIN: It's a Turkish café located behind a warehouse deep in the industrial district. The entire area has yet to be gentrified, but I prefer it to any of the so-called "hip" neighborhoods these days. Anyway, I have a show up there at the moment.

SIDNEY: Wait, I think I have heard of that place. As I recall, my friend invited me to a very small concert there, but I was busy bottling my home-brewed kombucha.

ROBIN: What kind of kombucha did you make? I just finished a batch of juniper-hawthorne. I'm making a dandelion one next.

SIDNEY: I find predetermined flavors to be oppressive. You can't fully understand the taste of something unless you don't know what it is you're drinking. You can sample some of mine sometime if you'd like. I harvested the ingredients in the wilds of British Columbia – you can't get most of them around here at all.

ROBIN: No thanks. I don't eat anything not grown within a mile of my house. Would you like to see a picture of my latest meal? *(Pulls up a screen on his phone to show SIDNEY.)*

SIDNEY: *(Looks and shrugs.)* Yeah, I'd say that's about what my meals look like every day. I tend not to use silverware, though. It's even more oppressive than predetermined flavors. Would you like to see a picture of my Victrola? *(Already pulling up a screen to show ROBIN.)*

ROBIN: *(Looks and shrugs.)* I think I would have framed that photograph a little differently.

SIDNEY: Don't feel bad. Most people don't understand my art. Anyway, I do my best work with my Polaroid.

ROBIN: I'll take your word for it. How would you like to see a picture of my kombucha setup?

SIDNEY: How would you like to see a picture of mine?

(Both pay no attention to the other and continue scrolling through their phones.)

44. Shopping for Bargains

Cast: ELLEN and KAILEY
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None

KAILEY: The sale starts at seven a.m. tomorrow, but we'll need to be in line by five-thirty to be sure we get first choice on the specials.

ELLEN: You are crazy. Tomorrow is the only morning all week that we can sleep in, and you plan to get up at five-thirty to go shopping? It will still be dark out.

KAILEY: It won't be dark inside the mall. If we set our alarms for four-fifteen, we'll have time to shower and still get there by five-thirty.

ELLEN: I am not getting up at four-fifteen. At four-fifteen, I will be sleeping soundly in my snug little bed.

KAILEY: The early bird gets the worm.

ELLEN: I don't want any worms. What do you plan to buy that's so important you'd get up that early?

KAILEY: Shoes! All shoes are buy one pair, get the second pair at half price. That's an amazing bargain – fifty percent off the regular price on shoes!

ELLEN: Actually, that wouldn't be fifty percent off the regular price. It would be twenty-five percent off.

KAILEY: No, the ad says half price. "Buy one pair and get the second pair at half price." Half is fifty percent.

ELLEN: If you pay full price for the first pair and half price for the second pair, then your total discount for both pairs is twenty-five percent.

KAILEY: Oh. Well, that's still a good bargain.

ELLEN: It's only a bargain if you need shoes. You got new shoes for your birthday. Your closet overflows with shoes. Why do you need more shoes?

KAILEY: Need, schmeed. You can never have too many shoes. You should come with me. It'll be fun.

ELLEN: I don't want more shoes. I want more sleep.

KAILEY: Shoes aren't the only specials. There's lots of other stuff on sale too. All toys and games are marked down. Drills and screwdrivers are half price until eight. You can get an electric egg cooker for only ten dollars.

ELLEN: Why would I want an electric egg cooker? Or a screwdriver?

KAILEY: You're missing the point, and if you stay home, you'll miss the bargains, too. Not to mention the thrill of the hunt! Where's your sense of adventure? Who knows what fabulous deals we might find if we're the first shoppers to rush inside the door?

ELLEN: Even bargains cost money. How do you plan to pay for all this?

KAILEY: I'll use the fifty dollars that Grandma gave me for Christmas. She gave you fifty dollars too, so there's no reason you can't go shopping.

ELLEN: Yes there is.

KAILEY: What's the reason?

ELLEN: I no longer have my fifty dollars.

KAILEY: You only got it two days ago. How could you have spent it so soon? What did you buy?

ELLEN: Well, I –

KAILEY: Wait! I know. You put the money in your savings account, didn't you? Grandma's always telling us how quickly compound interest adds up, and that if we save our money now we'll be really glad in the future, so you stuck your fifty bucks in the bank and now Grandma's all proud of you for being smart and thrifty, and I'm going to look like a brainless dodo bird for spending mine at the mall instead of saving it.

ELLEN: Nobody thinks you're a brainless dodo bird.

KAILEY: Oh, no? I'll come home tomorrow with my two pairs of shoes that I don't really need and a game that nobody wants to play and maybe even a screwdriver – a screwdriver! – that I'll give to Dad on his birthday, even though he already has plenty of screwdrivers, and you'll look smug because you know that ten years from now when I'm destitute and begging on the street corner, you'll be living in your own house that you bought with all the money from your savings account.

ELLEN: You are seriously jumping to conclusions.

KAILEY: Why can't you be a normal person? Why do you have to be so perfect? Now I can't even enjoy going to the sale because I'll feel like I'm blowing my money on something worthless instead of saving it for my future.

ELLEN: I never said you shouldn't go to the sale. I only said I'm not going.

KAILEY: You're not going because your fifty dollars is in a savings account compounding like crazy and making you rich.

ELLEN: My money is not compounding. I didn't put it in my savings account.

KAILEY: Oh, great! You bought a mutual fund! That's even worse! You learned all about investments and now you own shares of Starbucks and Microsoft and your fifty dollars are already worth fifty-one dollars and thirteen cents.

ELLEN: If you think I own shares of Starbucks and Microsoft, maybe you are a brainless dodo bird.

KAILEY: You didn't buy a mutual fund?

ELLEN: I don't know the first thing about mutual funds. Even if I wanted to invest in the stock market, which I don't because I don't have any money left to invest,

I wouldn't have a clue how to go about it.

KAILEY: If you didn't buy stocks and you didn't put the money in your savings account, what did you do with it?

ELLEN: I spent it.

KAILEY: Already? All of it?

ELLEN: All of it.

KAILEY: On what?

ELLEN: Chocolate-covered caramels.

KAILEY: You spent the whole fifty dollars on chocolate-covered caramels?

ELLEN: I like chocolate-covered caramels.

KAILEY: It's amazing you didn't get sick.

ELLEN: I didn't eat them all yet. I still have most of them. Chocolate-covered caramels are my favorite treat in the whole world, and I love having a big box of them in my drawer. Sometimes I open the box just to smell them. Nothing smells better than chocolate-covered caramels.

KAILEY: Grandma might not be disappointed in me after all. Six months from now you won't have anything to show for your Christmas money except maybe a cavity. At least I'll have shoes to wear.

ELLEN: I'll have good memories. I'll remember how great it was to have all these chocolate-covered caramels and to know I could eat one any time I got a craving, which is pretty much every day.

KAILEY: You're right. You'll have fun memories, and so will I. The shoes aren't really why I want to go to the sale. It's the fun of getting up early and being there when the stores open and racing around like a NASCAR driver, searching for fantastic prices. That's the part I like. That's what I'll remember.

ELLEN: I hope you find lots of amazing bargains tomorrow morning. Just don't buy me an electric egg

cooker for my birthday – and don't wake me up when you leave.

KAILEY: I won't on one condition.

ELLEN: What's that?

KAILEY: Can I have a chocolate-covered caramel?

45. The Tooth Fairy Conspiracy

Cast: KID and MOM

Setting: No special set required.

Props: A dollar bill for Mom, kept in her pocket. A small object to represent Kid's tooth.

KID: Mom! I lost a tooth!

MOM: Honey! That's great! It's about time; that tooth was hanging on by a thread.

KID: My first one! Look at it! *(Holds out tooth.)*

MOM: Looks like a healthy tooth. You're doing a good job of brushing. Let's see your smile. *(KID grins widely.)* **Very nice.**

KID: My class is gonna be so jealous! Can I take it to school in the morning?

MOM: Aren't you going to put it under your pillow?

KID: What for?

MOM: For the tooth fairy, of course.

KID: The what?

MOM: Haven't I ever told you about the tooth fairy?

KID: No. I don't like the sound of that. Does it bite?

MOM: She's not called the tooth fairy because of her own teeth. She takes away your baby teeth when they fall out.

KID: And gives you big kid teeth?

MOM: No, you're going to grow your adult teeth yourself.

KID: Then how come the tooth fairy gets my baby teeth?

MOM: The tooth fairy will give you a quarter in exchange for every tooth you lose.

KID: Actually, I heard Eric talking about this tooth fairy thing once at school. But why does she need baby teeth?

MOM: Baby teeth have sentimental value.

KID: To the tooth fairy? I don't even know the tooth fairy.

MOM: The tooth fairy knows you.
KID: That's a little weird.
MOM: It's not weird. The tooth fairy knows everyone.
KID: Does the tooth fairy know Grandpa? Grandpa doesn't have any teeth.
MOM: Grandpa used to have teeth. He just lost them a long time ago.
KID: He lost them? Or the tooth fairy took them?
MOM: The tooth fairy won't come and steal your teeth. You have to offer them to her. That's why you should put your tooth under your pillow tonight. When the tooth fairy makes her rounds, she'll see that you lost a tooth and she'll take it away and replace it with a quarter.
KID: How does she know who lost a tooth? Does she have to check every pillow every night?
MOM: She has her ways of knowing.
KID: Well, what are they? Cameras? Spies? I don't like the idea of being watched all the time. And how does she get around to everyone?
MOM: I suppose she flies.
KID: She must fly pretty fast.
MOM: Santa flies around the world in one night.
KID: Santa has nine reindeer to help him.
MOM: The tooth fairy's had a lot of practice. She's been around since I was a little girl.
KID: Really? She must be ancient.
MOM: Excuse me?
KID: Just sayin'. Hey, how does the tooth fairy get the tooth from under the pillow?
MOM: You sure have a lot of questions about this. I'm guessing she just reaches under the pillow for it. Why?
KID: I'll be sleeping on my pillow! I don't want the tooth fairy sneaking around my bed while I'm trying to

sleep. I have a soccer game against the second graders tomorrow at recess, and I need my rest.

MOM: I'm sure the tooth fairy will be very careful not to wake you up. She's a professional.

KID: What if she sees something she likes better than my tooth and takes that instead?

MOM: The tooth fairy is not going to rob you.

KID: How do you know? If she has honest business to do with me, she can come during the day when I'm awake. Why isn't she here now? *(Yells.)* Hey, tooth fairy! Come out and we'll talk about how much I'm willing to part with this tooth for.

MOM: This isn't a business transaction! The tooth fairy comes to everyone. It's tradition. And prices are non-negotiable.

KID: I heard one of the second graders say she got a dollar from the tooth fairy one time. Besides, this is a good tooth! No cavities, nice white color. I bet Eric would buy this tooth from me for more than a quarter.

MOM: Eric doesn't want your tooth. It's all germy.

KID: Doesn't it seem suspicious that the tooth fairy wants it, then? You think she's not going to touch my video games or slingshot but is going to leave money for my germy little tooth? What does she do with all the teeth she collects, anyway? It makes me think they might actually be more valuable than you're letting on.

MOM: Why would I lie to you about the value of your tooth?

KID: You might be in cahoots with the tooth fairy.

MOM: That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.

KID: Are you?

MOM: None of my friends' kids made this much of a fuss. They all cooperated with the tooth fairy.

KID: You're not answering the question.

MOM: What do you think the tooth fairy and I have to be

in cahoots about?

KID: Who can say? Maybe you're afraid that if I get a fair price for this tooth, I'll spend it all on candy. All I know is that the tooth fairy has the tooth market cornered, because she refuses to come out and negotiate a fair price while anyone is awake.

MOM: The tooth fairy gives you a quarter. She doesn't have to give you anything at all.

KID: Sure she does, because if she didn't, I wouldn't leave my tooth under the pillow. I'd lock it up in my safe and wait for it to become a valuable antique. Anyway, she buys my tooth wholesale, and then she sells it at a mark-up and takes a cut of the profits –

MOM: Who do you think is out there buying up teeth for a higher price than the tooth fairy?

KID: Moms! Now that I think about it, I bet you'd really like to have this tooth. Only moms like things with "sentimental value." But if the tooth fairy has a monopoly on buying and selling teeth, you would have no choice but to pay any price she asks. You're perpetuating the cycle! I bet she would re-sell you this little tooth for four times what she paid.

MOM: Where did you learn so much about economics?

KID: Look Mom, let's cut out the middle man. I'll offer you a fair price for this tooth, and we can bust up the tooth fairy monopoly once and for all. It's the free market economy at its best.

MOM: And just what are you asking for your tooth?

KID: For this fine incisor? I'd be willing to accept two dollars. Only because you're my mom.

MOM: I'll give you a dollar.

KID: One dollar! That's highway robbery!

MOM: Welcome to the free market. That's my final offer.

KID: I still think Eric would pay more. But I'll take a dollar if you throw a few extra Oreos in my lunch this

week.

MOM: You've got yourself a deal. *(KID and MOM shake hands, MOM hands KID the dollar from her pocket, and KID drops tooth into MOM's hand.)*

KID: Pleasure doing business with you. *(They nod at each other, and KID and MOM turn and exit in opposite directions.)*

46. Yellowstone National Yawn

Characters: GUIDE and TEXTER

Setting: A tour bus in Yellowstone National Park. A plain chair serves as a bus seat.

Props: Cell phone for Texter

(As scene opens, TEXTER is seated in the chair with the cell phone. He continues to look at phone throughout duologue. TEXTER's lines are what he's typing. GUIDE stands beside TEXTER, looking out the window.)

GUIDE: Welcome to Yellowstone National Park. My name is _____ *(Giving real name)* **and I'll be your guide for today's bus tour.**

TEXTER: Hey, yoooo! What's up?

GUIDE: Yellowstone was established in 1872 and is America's first national park.

TEXTER: We're in some park. Parents insisted we take a tour. I'm crammed on a bus with thirty other people. At least there's cell service.

GUIDE: Be sure to watch for wildlife as we go. Yellowstone is home to grizzly bears, wolves, elk, bison, and bighorn sheep. Feeding the animals is not allowed. If you leave the bus, you must stay one hundred yards from wolves and bears, and twenty-five yards from all other animals. If you cause an animal to move, you are too close.

TEXTER: Had to get up at six today. Not my idea of vacation.

GUIDE: On your left you can see the Norris Geyser Basin, the hottest of Yellowstone's thermal areas. Norris has had thermal activity for at least one hundred and fifteen thousand years.

TEXTER: Our guide is babbling about history. If I wanted a history lesson, I would have gone to summer school.

GUIDE: Most of the water in the Norris area is acidic, including some rare acidic geysers. Right over there *(Pointing)* **is Steamboat Geyser, the tallest geyser in the world. It measures between three hundred and four hundred feet.**

TEXTER: What are you doing tonight?

GUIDE: Yellowstone has almost sixty percent of the world's geysers, one hundred and fifty of them in one square mile! Of these, only five erupt regularly enough for the park staff to predict their eruptions. Old Faithful is the best known of these.

TEXTER: I heart baseball games! Wish I could go with you, but no, stuck on worst road trip ever.

GUIDE: The time between eruptions of Old Faithful varies from thirty-five minutes to two hours. Each eruption lasts from one and a half to five minutes, and the length of each eruption determines how long before the next eruption.

TEXTER: I suppose you're going to Pizza Palace afterwards.

GUIDE: We are now crossing the Firehole River, which is world famous for its beauty and its challenging fly fishing. The river has an abundance of brown, brook, and rainbow trout.

TEXTER: Try their Sausage Delight with extra cheese. Best pizza I've ever had. Meh! Now I'm hungry.

GUIDE: The Excelsior Geyser, with a crater that measures two hundred by three hundred feet, discharges four hundred gallons of water per minute into the Firehole River.

TEXTER: Parents are oohing and aahing 'cause somebody spotted an eagle. Like, seriously? We can see birds at home.

GUIDE: The bus has stopped because we are now on the forty-fifth parallel, an imaginary line that circles the

globe exactly half way between the equator and the North Pole. This same line goes through Minneapolis-St. Paul, Ottawa, Venice, Belgrade, and the northern tip of the Japanese islands.

TEXTER: We've stopped. I hope we don't have a flat tire or something because there definitely isn't anything to see or do here.

GUIDE: Isa Lake sits on the Continental Divide, and when the snow melts in the spring, Isa Lake drains into the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans at the same time!

TEXTER: Wanna hang out when I get back? There're a million shows on Netflix. *Game of Thrones* marathon, maybe?

GUIDE: Just ahead you'll see beautiful Yellowstone Lake. It covers thirty-two square miles and is the largest lake in the park. Many arrowheads, spearheads, and other Native American artifacts have been found on its shores. You won't want to go swimming, though. The average temperature of the water is forty-one degrees.

TEXTER: I hope we get home Saturday afternoon, but if we keep wasting time on tours, we might not make it until Sunday. I swear we've stopped the car at every historic marker in the last five hundred miles and not a single one was worth reading. Right now we're stopped at some lake. Maybe we get to go swimming.

GUIDE: In 1988, fire burned Yellowstone's lodgepole pine forest. The North Fork Fire started from a discarded cigarette and burned for weeks. In one day, the winds increased to sixty miles per hour and the fire raced out of control across the Lewis River Canyon. In that one day, now known as Black Saturday, more acres burned than in the entire previous history of Yellowstone.

TEXTER: No swimming apparently, we're bumbling along

again. Have you seen Mark or Chelsea? They both promised to text me, but they're M.I.A.

GUIDE: Look off to the left in those trees! There's a wolf.

TEXTER: What movie are you going to?

GUIDE: Two wolves! The wolves had vanished from Yellowstone, but they were reintroduced in 1995 and 1996.

TEXTER: I'm so jeals! Wait 'til I get home, and I'll go with you. I love nature documentaries. I saw a sweet National Geographic special once about wolves. I'd watch that again if you're interested.

GUIDE: Having natural predators keeps the park's ecosystem balanced. The wolves have thrived, and there are currently more than three hundred of them in the greater Yellowstone area.

TEXTER: What else have you done since I left?

GUIDE: Yellowstone has more than ten thousand brilliantly colored hot springs, bubbling mudpots, and steam vents.

TEXTER: You're so lucky. I wish my parents would let me sleep in every day and play computer games. But no, I have to be dragged across the country so I can listen to some guide yammer on about mud and steam. Next summer I'm getting a job so I have an excuse to stay home.

GUIDE: In the peak summer months, thirty-five hundred people are employed by Yellowstone National Park concessioners. Eight hundred more work for the National Park Service.

TEXTER: I suppose I'll apply at Pizza Palace. Not many other choices. It'll be boring, but not as bad as a road trip with the 'rents.

GUIDE: I hope you have enjoyed this brief tour of Yellowstone National Park and will explore it further on foot or horseback.

TEXTER: Finally! Tour is finished. I can get off this abysmal bus. Text me later!

47. My Rotten Roommate

Cast: GEORGE and NATHAN

Setting: A college dorm. Two small desks if available, but two chairs will work.

Props: A laptop for each player.

(As scene opens, GEORGE and NATHAN are both writing letters on their laptops, angled slightly away from each other.)

GEORGE: Dear Mom and Pop, You left just in time. If you had stayed another fifteen minutes, you might have met my roommate.

NATHAN: Hey, sibs, Here it is, your first letter from the family's official college student. And the verdict is ... dorm life is not all it's cracked up to be. The problem is my roommate.

GEORGE: I was alphabetizing my books on the shelf when Nathan arrived. He rushed in, said, "Yo, roomie," dropped a backpack on the floor, and left. He came back ten minutes later with two black garbage bags full of stuff. That was his luggage!

NATHAN: George had finished unpacking when I got there and was trying to find a place to store his three-piece set of matched monogrammed luggage. I told him that's why I packed my stuff in plastic bags. He raised an eyebrow at me and promptly took up half the closet space with his suitcases.

GEORGE: Nathan lost his key to our room on the first day. Please don't ask me where he could have put it that fast, because I don't know. It costs fifty dollars to replace a key, so rather than buy a new one, he has taken to using our dorm room window as a door.

NATHAN: The second night of school, George called campus

security on me. He had locked the window earlier in the day, so when I got home late from the library, I had to try to jimmy the latch. He thought I was a burglar breaking in, so he hid in the closet and called security on his cell phone. Next thing I know, I've got flashlights shining in my face and a disapproving security guard asking me if I'm a student here.

GEORGE: Nathan and I are both musically inclined, which is the only reason I can imagine why the misguided housing office decided to put us together. Nathan plays the saxophone. Constantly. He drowns out the chords on my guitar.

NATHAN: George thinks he's musical too. He can play one song on the guitar, and it's "Banana Pancakes" by Jack Johnson. Sometimes I pick up my sax and start playing just so I don't have to listen to "Banana Pancakes" for the five hundredth time.

GEORGE: We've been here a week now, and Nathan has yet to make his bed. I made it for him the first two days, but then I found a candy wrapper between the sheets. It's like a personalized invitation for ants. Now I try to ignore it and tell myself that *my* side of the room is tidy and sanitary, and that's what matters. But his side of the room is too close for my liking, especially when he leaves his dirty underwear on the floor.

NATHAN: George and I share a closet, which is fine, but would you believe that his clothes are hung by color? Shirts first, from dark to light, and then his pants. He has some weird things called shoe trees that he sticks in his loafers when he isn't wearing them. Every night before bed, he chooses what he's going to wear the next day and hangs it on a special hook he put on the back of our door. His favorite outfits include sweater vests.

GEORGE: I've begun kicking Nathan's boxers under his bed so I don't have to look at them. The first time he ran out of clean underwear, he got confused until he figured out where it had all gone. Then he fished everything out and, surprisingly, did laundry. Unsurprisingly, he threw everything in the machine at the same time. No wonder his shirts came out as dingy as they went in.

NATHAN: This dude irons his socks! No, I'm not kidding. He brought his own personal iron from home, and he irons his socks, his sheets, and his T-shirts. I actually saw him iron his tighty-whities! I think he would iron my backpack if I left it on his side of the room. I've started keeping it under my desk just in case he tries.

GEORGE: I think Nathan might be a hoarder. He hides his backpack and all his jeans under his desk like he's afraid I'll do something to them. He also sneaks food from the dining hall like every meal is his last supper. Pizza, cookies, toast ... you name it. Where does he put it all? In our shared mini-fridge. I've had to throw out six stale grilled-cheese sandwiches. I don't know why he bothers bringing food back. He keeps a colossal box of Pop-Tarts in there that should last him a month at least.

NATHAN: There's this mini-fridge in our room. I thought we'd share the space, and maybe share some food. Instead, George has decided that I have the top two shelves and he has the bottom two. The dining hall grilled-cheese sandwiches are the best, so I tried keeping extras in the fridge a few times. George threw every one of them away. I've started hiding the sandwiches in a cardboard box that used to hold Pop-Tarts, which so far has kept them safe from him.

GEORGE: I wouldn't be surprised if Nathan's deplorable eating habits lead directly to diabetes. At first I really

encouraged him to have more organic produce. I thought I was making progress when I came home to find that my fruits and veggies had been moved. Maybe, I thought, he was looking at the stickers to see where he could buy some of the same. But then I watched him eat three king-sized Snickers bars for lunch, so now I save my breath.

NATHAN: George is a health food junkie. His shelves hold apples, broccoli, carrots, and yogurt. Please note that these foods are arranged alphabetically. That's not a coincidence. I know because yesterday I switched the broccoli and the apples while George was at class, just to see what happened. They were back in their proper places in a matter of hours, and now they're labeled with his initials. I used to keep Snickers bars cold in the fridge, but every time George opened the fridge to get a baby carrot, he started groaning about how I was going to get diabetes and he was going to have to give me insulin shots. I moved my Snickers into my desk drawer, but sometimes I like to eat three or four of them at once just to see his face get pale.

GEORGE: Yesterday I went to the Student Housing Office and practically begged for a single. The housing officer said every one of them is taken this semester and told me he thought things would work out. I told him the chances were a million to one.

NATHAN: Yesterday I went to the Student Housing Office and asked to switch roommates. The housing guy said if I can find someone else to room with, we can apply for a different room and move out in the next few weeks. But to be honest, I haven't really met anyone here besides George.

GEORGE: Right now Nathan's hunched over his computer, probably figuring out how to order Snickers bars in bulk. He definitely doesn't want

anything to do with me.

NATHAN: I know I should try a little harder, but I can't imagine anything that George and I could have in common. He's at his desk across the room right now, probably ordering more closet organizers on Amazon. I miss you guys and the days where we would all go hang out and play Frisbee in the park or do whatever. I wish I had a roommate who'd be down for that.

GEORGE: OK, fine. I can practically hear you saying I should give him a second chance. I will turn around and ask him right now if he wants to hang out. But I can guarantee he'll say no. *(GEORGE turns to look over at NATHAN.)* **Do you want to go play Frisbee or something?**

NATHAN: *(Looks up at GEORGE. They pause.)* **Sure.** *(He and GEORGE turn slowly back to their computers.)* **Um, actually, you'll never believe what just happened. George wants to play Frisbee right now.**

GEORGE: OK, fine. Scratch that last part. Now I actually have to go play Frisbee with Nathan. This doesn't necessarily mean we're going to be friends. But I guess I'll let you know.

NATHAN: I've gotta go. Frisbee might be disastrous, but I'll write you guys more soon. *(He and GEORGE shut their laptops and stand up together.)* **How did you know I like Frisbee?**

GEORGE: I didn't. I was just hoping you did. I used to play Ultimate Frisbee in high school.

NATHAN: *(They start walking together.)* **You're joking. So did I!**

GEORGE: No way! What position?

NATHAN: Handler. Are you gonna try out for the school team?

GEORGE: I think so! Are you? *(They exit.)*

48. Coyote Passage

Cast: PILAR and ANTONIO
Setting: A Mexican border town. A chair is Center Stage.
Props: A pencil and piece of paper for Antonio

(As scene opens, ANTONIO is seated, poring over the piece of paper. He has a pencil in his pocket. PILAR enters, walks to where ANTONIO sits, and stands before him. ANTONIO looks up in slight surprise.)

ANTONIO: Your face looks familiar, girl.

PILAR: I've been here before. Six months ago.

ANTONIO: You came with your family.

PILAR: Yes.

ANTONIO: Mother, father, and little brother. Where are they now?

PILAR: My parents are in prison.

ANTONIO: How unfortunate.

PILAR: How dare you call it unfortunate. It's your fault.

ANTONIO: My fault? Check yourself, girl. Who sent them there? Not Antonio.

PILAR: No. Not Antonio. You disappeared and left us sinking into the strait.

ANTONIO: You knew there would be danger when you came to me six months ago.

PILAR: You led us to believe that you knew what you were doing.

ANTONIO: I know very well what I'm doing. I know the risks, and I communicated them to you.

PILAR: You put our chances of reaching the United States at ninety percent.

ANTONIO: And you fell into the unlucky ten.

PILAR: I've talked to other migrants since returning to Mexico. That wasn't the first time your ring was caught.

ANTONIO: Of course it wasn't. There's not a coyote along the Mexican border who hasn't been caught.

PILAR: You sped away awfully easily in that little boat of yours.

ANTONIO: Who runs this operation? I do. Hundreds of migrants a year owe their escape from Mexico to me. I know the route and I know the officials. The border agents and I have an understanding — I don't give them reason to arrest me, and I can try the crossing again the next week. That's why I lead the crossings in my own separate boat. If I were taken into custody, the knowledge of this route would be lost.

PILAR: You left your accomplice to the authorities, right along with the rest of us.

ANTONIO: Óscar? He is only sixteen years old. The U.S. government can't try him under their federal laws because he is a minor.

PILAR: And the other forty people you were supposed to be transporting? If the American agents hadn't found the boat, everyone would have drowned.

ANTONIO: Better back here than dead at the bottom of the Caribbean.

PILAR: Maybe.

ANTONIO: How is it that you are out of prison, anyway?

PILAR: I didn't go to prison. I hid under the capsized boat while the border agents hauled the rest of them into the cutter. Then I swam for shore. I was almost a mile away from the boat when I saw the agents come back for it in their helicopter. They lifted it out of the middle of the strait on four long ropes. I swam underwater and held my breath for as long as I possibly could while the helicopter rose up and flew away with the boat.

ANTONIO: You were the only one?

PILAR: A man I didn't know hid with me. We were the only

two who knew how to swim. I made my way back to my home, desperate to find my family. Then I learned that my parents were locked up by our own government for leaving without papers. My grandmother is caring for my brother, but she has no job and can barely support herself through the charity of our neighbors.

ANTONIO: So what is it that you want from me? To berate me? You have no case against me. What you tried to do is just as illegal as how I make my living.

PILAR: I have to try the crossing again.

ANTONIO: Try again? *(Shakes his head.)* I have a boat leaving tomorrow night, but I'm not sure you will be able to afford it. Immigration reform has made crossing the border even riskier. My prices have risen.

PILAR: You owe me a passage.

ANTONIO: I don't owe you anything. The cash your father paid up front is nonrefundable. He knew that.

PILAR: How much will it take now?

ANTONIO: Twenty-five hundred dollars a head. Half up front and half when we arrive.

PILAR: Twenty-five hundred!

ANTONIO: Plenty of people charge more. Especially for girls. Girls are more likely to die on the journey. You die, and the coyotes don't get paid. It's why I charge half up front.

PILAR: But everything we paid you the first time got us nowhere!

ANTONIO: Just because you didn't make it across the border doesn't mean there weren't costs. The boat, the rations, the officials — none of it comes cheap. I run a business here, missy. Not a charity.

PILAR: I have nothing. We spent our entire savings on the first attempted passage. I'm here to cross the border

so I can work for the money to care for my grandmother and little brother. There are no living wages where I come from.

ANTONIO: Look, girl. I'm sorry I can't help, but I'm not the end of the line. I have people I have to pay too. It may not seem fair to you, but nothing's fair on the U.S. border.

PILAR: There must be something you can do. You know the people here. I know no one. Is there anybody who will take me across for cheaper?

ANTONIO: *(Sighs.)* I know a man who runs a much riskier smuggling ring than the one I operate. He will let you cross for free, but you will have to carry certain illicit substances with you that could land you in prison for the rest of your life if you were to be caught.

PILAR: Where can I find him?

ANTONIO: You should not take this risk lightly, girl. The conditions are much worse than mine were. You will walk across the border through some of the harshest parts of the desert. You may not see food or water for days. If you get across without being found, you will travel north through other checkpoints packed into compartments in the floor of a truck. It may be difficult to breathe.

PILAR: I have no other option.

ANTONIO: *(Tears a corner from his paper, takes pencil from his pocket, and scrawls something on the paper.)* This is how you get in contact with him. You may be able to leave tonight.

PILAR: Thank you, for lack of better words.

ANTONIO: Good luck. That's all you can wish for.

49. Where There's a Will

Cast: LANE and KENDALL
Setting: No special set required.
Props: Pencil and notebook

(As scene opens, KENDALL is writing in the notebook.)

LANE: What are you writing?

KENDALL: I'm filling out my will.

LANE: Will? As in, when you die, who gets your money?

KENDALL: Yep.

LANE: Are you sick?

KENDALL: I'm fine now, but what if I got hit by a truck on my way to school tomorrow? If I didn't have a will, you wouldn't know my wishes.

LANE: Do you have a hidden fortune that I haven't heard about? Because the last I knew, you were broke and trying to borrow five bucks from me so you could go to a movie.

KENDALL: I'm still broke.

LANE: Then why are you bothering to write a will?

KENDALL: Everyone should have a will. Wills are not just for designating who gets your money. You can also decide who gets all your possessions. That's what I'm doing.

LANE: I've seen your room. If you get hit by a truck, Mom and Dad will rent a Dumpster and toss all your junk in it and have it hauled to the dump.

KENDALL: Junk, ha! If they tossed everything in my room, they'd be throwing away a lot of valuable stuff.

LANE: Like what?

KENDALL: Like my autograph collection.

LANE: You have an autograph collection? I didn't know that. Whose autographs do you have?

KENDALL: Tweetmore Birdsong, for one.

LANE: Who?
KENDALL: Don't tell me you've never heard of Tweetmore Birdsong!
LANE: Is he a singer?
KENDALL: Tweetmore Birdsong is only the most famous avian impersonator of all time. He can duplicate the sounds of forty-nine different birds.
LANE: You're making this up, right?
KENDALL: No! I saw Tweetmore Birdsong on TV. He did an imitation of a robin, a blue jay, a mourning dove, and an owl. He can even imitate a hummingbird.
LANE: Whoopee. No doubt there's a big demand for hummingbird impersonators. Can he fly too?
KENDALL: He is a genius at mimicking bird calls. If you had a mourning dove on one side of your yard and Tweetmore Birdsong on the other side and they were both calling, you wouldn't be able to tell which was the real bird.
LANE: Except the real bird would be sitting in a tree and I assume Tweetmore Genius Birdsong would be on the ground.
KENDALL: Tweetmore Birdsong is amazing!
LANE: How did you get his autograph?
KENDALL: I wrote him a letter and enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope. I told him I thought he was the most talented act I'd ever seen and asked if I could have his autograph. He signed a picture of a crow and sent it to me.
LANE: Who gets Tweetmore Birdsong's autographed crow when you kick the bucket?
KENDALL: The Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. They'll appreciate it, and lots of people will see it when it's displayed there.
LANE: I'm sure the Smithsonian will be thrilled. What other autographs do you have?

KENDALL: So far I only have Tweetmore Birdsong.
LANE: You said you had a collection. You need a minimum of three items in order for it to be considered a collection.
KENDALL: Says who?
LANE: Everyone knows you need at least three items to make a collection.
KENDALL: *(Tears a page out of the notebook and hands it and the pencil to LANE.)* **Here. Sign this, please.**
LANE: What for?
KENDALL: I want your autograph to add to my collection.
LANE: Oh, please.
KENDALL: Come on. It won't hurt you to sign your name.
LANE: *(Sighs, rolls eyes, and signs name. Hands paper back to KENDALL.)* **There. Are you happy now?**
KENDALL: You're the one who should be happy. Imagine being in the same collection as Tweetmore Birdsong!
LANE: That's still only two signatures.
KENDALL: Wrong. *(Signs name.)* **I'm number three. I now have an official autograph collection.**
LANE: What else is in your will?
KENDALL: My game day football. It's the ball that made the touchdown that won the game that clinched the championship.
LANE: What championship? You're not on a football team.
KENDALL: I used to be. I made the game-winning touchdown in the toddler league championship.
LANE: Toddler league? How old were you?
KENDALL: Three.
LANE: There are no football leagues for three-year-olds.
KENDALL: It wasn't exactly an official league. It was my play group, and we made up our own rules.
LANE: Is that the highlight of your life? A touchdown when you were three years old?
KENDALL: No, but it was important at the time.

LANE: Who is the lucky recipient of this treasured football?

KENDALL: I don't know. The only people who would remember that game are the kids I played it with, and that was when we still lived in Pittsburgh. I don't know where any of them live now. I don't even remember their last names.

LANE: Moving right along ...

KENDALL: OK, maybe I shouldn't put the football in my will.

LANE: The football is definitely Dumpster material.

KENDALL: No! You can donate it to one of the thrift stores. Some little kid will be glad to have that football.

LANE: What other bequests are you making?

KENDALL: I'm trying to decide what to do with my jars of toenail clippings.

LANE: Ew! Please tell me you have not saved your toenail clippings.

KENDALL: I've saved them for two years, and if you were smart, you'd save yours too.

LANE: What possible use would I have for toenail clippings?

KENDALL: They're for drug tests. Toenails contain the biomaterial keratin, which means tests on them can show deposits of drugs and drug metabolites. Toenail clippings can confirm the presence of cocaine, amphetamines, opiates, oxycondone, and other drugs.

LANE: I don't use drugs and neither do you. Do you?

KENDALL: Of course not.

LANE: Then what makes you think you'll be asked to take a drug test?

KENDALL: If I decide to go out for a sport, a drug test might be required. To absolutely prove the absence of drugs, more than one test is necessary and, since

toenails grow so slowly, the clippings need to be taken several weeks apart. By being prepared, I'll save lots of time.

LANE: I thought the sports teams tested your urine. You pee in a jar, and two days later, you're either on the team or eliminated.

KENDALL: Toenail clippings avoid the embarrassment. Some employers demand a drug test too, before they'll hire you. If you have your toenail clippings on hand, you can speed up the process.

LANE: Somehow I can't picture myself going on a job interview and handing the interviewer a jar of my toenail clippings.

KENDALL: My motto is "Think Ahead." That's why I'm writing my will.

LANE: Once you're dead, you won't be trying out for a sports team or applying for a job, so it's probably safe to leave the toenail clippings out of your will.

KENDALL: Oh. Then I suppose they're destined for the Dumpster.

LANE: Forget the toenails. What about your good stuff? Who gets your Mickey Mouse watch?

KENDALL: I hadn't thought about that. Do you want it?

LANE: Yes. I love that watch.

KENDALL: I thought you said all of my stuff belonged in the Dumpster.

LANE: Everything except your Mickey Mouse watch.

KENDALL: What's it worth to you?

LANE: You want to sell me your Mickey Mouse watch? Grandma and Grandpa gave that to you.

KENDALL: I'd never sell it. I just want to know what you'll give me if I leave the watch to you in my will.

LANE: Much as I might hope otherwise, you are probably going to live for at least another sixty years. By then I won't care about a Mickey Mouse watch.

KENDALL: By then a genuine Mickey Mouse watch will probably be worth a fortune. I'll leave it to you in my will if you mow the lawn for me all this month.

LANE: Forget it. This whole conversation is ridiculous.

KENDALL: I'll make you a deal. I'll leave you my Mickey Mouse watch in my will if you make a will and leave me your Miss Piggy T-shirt.

LANE: I'll think about it.

KENDALL: You never wear that Miss Piggy T-shirt.

LANE: You never wear your Mickey Mouse watch.

KENDALL: You want to trade?

LANE: You mean now?

KENDALL: My watch for your T-shirt. Neither of us has to wait sixty years.

LANE: It's a deal. *(They shake hands, and exit.)*

50. Focus

Cast: REESE and JORDAN

Setting: A library study room. A table is Center Stage. Two chairs are positioned across the table from one another.

Props: Small pill bottle for Reese. Textbooks and laptops for both players.

(As scene opens, REESE and JORDAN are seated across from each other with textbooks and laptops open. REESE has the pill bottle in his pocket. He jiggles his leg and types intently on his computer. JORDAN stares contemplatively at his computer. REESE suddenly looks up at JORDAN.)

REESE: Hey, Jordan. You *are* coming camping with us tomorrow, aren't you?

JORDAN: *(Heaves a sigh.)* **I can't, dude. I wish. I'm going to be right here in this study room all weekend. It's my final push on this awful senior project.**

REESE: You're that far behind?

JORDAN: Yeah. I put it off way too long.

REESE: But camping! We've done it every year!

JORDAN: I know it. I'm going to be so jealous of you guys. Especially because this project is straight-up busy work. You know administration only assigned it to keep us from pulling senior pranks. It's not hard ... I just can't concentrate.

REESE: How many more pages do you have left to write?

JORDAN: Ten. Plus the bibliography.

REESE: Dang. You *are* behind. Why'd you leave it so long?

JORDAN: Because there's been so much stuff to do! Everyone is finishing up with their senior stuff and barbecuing on the beach and having softball games and going to shows. I can't resist the peer pressure. Every time someone invites me anywhere, I end up

saying yes. I keep telling myself that I've gotta take every opportunity and live it up while we're all together for a few more weeks.

REESE: That's not a bad thing, is it?

JORDAN: No! It's been the best semester of my life. Until right now. Now I'm going to have to miss out on the one thing I care about most because I couldn't say no to the other stuff.

REESE: I know a way you can get it all done.

JORDAN: Oh, yeah? Time travel?

REESE: Nope. Here. *(Removes pill bottle from his pocket and rolls it across the table to JORDAN.)* **It's on me.**

JORDAN: *(Picks up the bottle and examines it.)* **What's this? ADD meds?**

REESE: Yeah.

JORDAN: I'm not gonna take these, man.

REESE: Jordan, it's fine. I've had all I need. I've got about an hour 'til I'm done with my work. Why do you think I've been so productive tonight?

JORDAN: You're on these right now? I can't even tell.

REESE: It doesn't make a big difference. All it does is let you focus all your attention on the task at hand.

JORDAN: Then how come you're not typing a mile a minute?

REESE: I'll get there in a sec. Right now the task at hand is convincing you that you've got to leave with us on that camping trip in the morning.

JORDAN: Do you always take these?

REESE: Only when I'm really pressed for time. I try not to overuse 'em. They're probably not good for me.

JORDAN: Yeah, probably not. Don't you think this is kind of sketchy?

REESE: Not really. Why?

JORDAN: Who do you get these from?

REESE: It's my prescription. Look at the bottle.

JORDAN: Oh! I thought you were buying them up.

REESE: Naw. Do I look like a hoodlum to you?

JORDAN: Only when you go around rolling pill bottles across the table!

REESE: OK, you've got me there. I didn't mean to weird you out. But like half our classmates have prescriptions for this stuff. It's not hard to get. We're seriously an ADHD generation. Have you never taken it?

JORDAN: No. I've never felt like I needed to.

REESE: But Jordan, if you were going to take it one time, wouldn't it be the night that you could get ten pages of writing done and go camping with your four best friends in the morning?

JORDAN: When you put it like that, yeah. But I also feel like if I take it once, I'll never be able to get anything done of my own accord again. I'll always be like, "I could be so much more productive with those meds."

REESE: OK. That's honestly good thinking. I don't think most people who take it actually need it. But for you, this is the last milestone before summer. You won't have another project for months, and the meds will be the last thing on your mind. I mean, I've been taking them since middle school, and I've never felt dependent. It's just a nice push to get my work done on occasion.

JORDAN: Maybe you're fine, but I have an addictive personality. Last year I got so hooked on caffeine, I woke up with migraines that only went away around the third cup of coffee. It only took me two months to get that used to it.

REESE: Can I suggest that you've been influenced by a slightly closed-minded health curriculum? Try not to think of these as so much of a drug.

JORDAN: Maybe health class was one-sided, but they did

warn me about peer pressure. Listen to you! You're a bad influence, Reese.

REESE: Hey, you're right. I'm sorry, man! I don't mean to pressure you. I just want you to come camping so bad!

JORDAN: I know, I know. But here's the way I see it ... if I'm going to sacrifice something in the name of having the weekend of my life with my best friends, shouldn't it be this busy work project the school assigned and not my academic integrity?

REESE: I'd buy that. But wait a second ... does this mean you're considering coming camping?

JORDAN: *(Sighs again.)* I don't know, man.

REESE: OK Jordan, humor me for one more second and then I'll let you work. If we run a cost-benefit analysis of the situation, you've got two options. You either spend a rotten weekend locked away slaving over a project that you said yourself was dumb busy work in the first place, or you cut yourself some slack – just this once – to spend the weekend of your life camping with your best friends one last time before graduation. You've already got a solid GPA, you're accepted at a great school, and they're not going to reject you just because you get a B minus on the final assignment of your high school career.

JORDAN: Reese. The peer pressure. You're doing it again.

REESE: This is the good side of peer pressure! The one they never talked about in health class. I'm only gonna say one more thing: it's supposed to be eighty-five degrees and spotlessly sunny.

JORDAN: You're killing me, man. How many hours 'til you guys were gonna leave?

REESE: What time is it now?

JORDAN: Nine o'clock.

REESE: We've got about ten hours.

JORDAN: Ten hours. You know, I haven't pulled an all-

nighter in awhile ...

REESE: You can sleep in the car!

JORDAN: That gives me what, about an hour a page? *(Nods to himself, thinking. Then he rolls the pill bottle back across the table to REESE.)* **Yo, I don't need this stuff. I used to be able to crank pages out like this when I was a junior writing college essays. Let's get this show on the road!** *(Starts to type.)*

REESE: *(Picks up the pill bottle and smiles.)* **I gotta say, props, dude. But still – thank goodness for peer pressure!**

51. Snow White and the Fortune Teller

Cast: SNOW WHITE and MADAME SEER
Setting: Madame Seer's room. Two chairs face each other.
Props: None

(As scene opens, MADAME SEER is Center Stage near the chairs. SNOW WHITE enters.)

MADAME SEER: Come in, dearie. I am Madame Seer, teller of fortunes. I can read sadness or joy in your palm and foresee your future. Come, come, my child. I sense your fear, but you need not be afraid of Madame Seer. I will calm you. I will help you.

SNOW WHITE: Oh, Madame Seer. I'm so scared I don't know what to do!

MADAME SEER: You have come to the right place. I, Madame Seer, will look into the days ahead of you and tell you whom you can trust and what you should do.

SNOW WHITE: Thank you!

MADAME SEER: You are trembling, my child. What is it that frightens you so?

SNOW WHITE: It's Queen Savage. She wants me killed.

MADAME SEER: The Queen! Why would Queen Savage, well known to be the wealthiest, most powerful, and most beautiful woman in all the kingdom, want to do away with a sweet girl like you?

SNOW WHITE: Because of her mirror. She has a talking mirror, and when she asked it, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?" she expected the mirror to say it was her. That's what the mirror always said in the past. This time the mirror told her about me. It said I was the fairest in the land.

MADAME SEER: So the queen is jealous of your youthful beauty.

SNOW WHITE: She hired a woodchopper to hunt me down and kill me and take my heart back to her. I fled through the forest, and when he caught me, he took pity on me and killed a wild boar instead. He cut out its heart and gave it to the Queen.

MADAME SEER: Good thinking. Problem solved.

SNOW WHITE: The problem was solved until she asked, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?" and the mirror said again that it was me. The Queen figured out that she had been tricked and that I'm still alive, and now she's coming after me herself!

MADAME SEER: Not to brag or anything, but without even looking at your palm, I already know you have serious trouble.

SNOW WHITE: You are truly remarkable! Besides being afraid, I feel so guilty! That poor wild pig. All he was doing was rooting around under the trees looking for truffles, and then he got stabbed to death and his heart cut out and carried to the Queen. It wasn't his fault that I have a flawless complexion and naturally curly hair.

MADAME SEER: Not to mention an abundance of modesty.

SNOW WHITE: I feel bad about the woodchopper, too. He'll never be able to work in these woods again. The Queen put a price on his head, and he had to run away to save his own life. All because of me and my great beauty.

MADAME SEER: Please be seated, my dear. I'll take a look at your palm and see what's going to happen next. *(SNOW WHITE sits. MADAME SEER sits opposite her and takes SNOW WHITE's hand.)*

SNOW WHITE: What do you see? Is there any hope for me?

MADAME SEER: I see you living in a cozy cottage with seven men.

SNOW WHITE: Seven men! That has to be a mistake. I don't have a boyfriend. I've never even dated. On the night of the junior prom, I stayed home and watched *Cinderella*.

MADAME SEER: These men care a great deal for you.

SNOW WHITE: They do? All of them?

MADAME SEER: All of them. They like having you live with them, and they want to protect you.

SNOW WHITE: That's good, I guess. But seven of them? What do they look like? I wonder if I already know any of them.

MADAME SEER: They are small men.

SNOW WHITE: How small?

MADAME SEER: They appear to stand about four feet tall.

SNOW WHITE: I'm five foot five. I can't see myself involved with a guy who's only four feet. Are you sure they're full-grown?

MADAME SEER: They appear to be dwarfs. Yes, I see that you are living with seven dwarfs.

SNOW WHITE: I wonder where I'll meet them. What do they do for a living?

MADAME SEER: They're in diamonds.

SNOW WHITE: Diamonds! I suppose height isn't the most important consideration when choosing a man.

MADAME SEER: They ride deep into a mine each day and dig out the diamonds.

SNOW WHITE: Do they get to keep them? I've always wanted a diamond tiara. They're so sparkly. A diamond tiara would be perfect on my naturally curly hair.

MADAME SEER: The diamonds belong to the owner of the mine.

SNOW WHITE: Oh. Queen Savage must not know about the dwarfs' house.

MADAME SEER: She knows. She follows you there and

offers you a poisoned apple.

SNOW WHITE: I'm glad to know this in advance. I'll refuse her apple and send her away.

MADAME SEER: She comes back in disguise. She is a very clever queen, and you are a foolish young girl.

SNOW WHITE: Now wait just a minute. What makes you think I'm foolish? I got ninety-eight percent on my last science test.

MADAME SEER: I can see the future. The queen will trick you into taking a bite from the poisoned apple, and you will fall into a deep coma.

SNOW WHITE: Where are the dwarfs while this is going on? What kind of protectors are they?

MADAME SEER: They are at work. When they return from the diamond mine, they find you on the floor.

SNOW WHITE: And do CPR, and revive me?

MADAME SEER: Alas, the dwarfs do not have first aid skills, only loving and generous hearts.

SNOW WHITE: What happens next?

MADAME SEER: The dwarfs seal you in a glass coffin and set it outside in their yard, where they can watch over you.

SNOW WHITE: Ick! Why would they want to look at a body in a coffin every day? What kind of weirdo dwarfs are they?

MADAME SEER: You remain there for ten years.

SNOW WHITE: What? I can't lie around in a coffin for ten years! I've applied to cosmetology school. I'm supposed to start in September.

MADAME SEER: I can only tell you what I see in your palm, and I have never been wrong.

SNOW WHITE: The moral clearly is that I should never bite into another apple as long as I live, no matter who offers it to me. I don't care if Johnny Depp *(Or insert name of current movie idol)* shows up and

hands me an apple, I'm saying no.

MADAME SEER: You can only know the future; you can't change it.

SNOW WHITE: What?! I'm paying you twenty dollars to learn that I'll be tricked by the evil Queen and end up lying in a glass coffin? You were supposed to help me! You were supposed to make me feel better. *(SNOW WHITE stands.)* **I'm leaving!**

MADAME SEER: Don't you want to know what happens in the end?

SNOW WHITE: There's more?

MADAME SEER: At the end of ten years, a handsome prince rides up on his stallion, sees you in the coffin, and falls madly in love with you.

SNOW WHITE: Is he some kind of pervert? Who falls in love with a dead body?

MADAME SEER: The dwarfs allow him to kiss you, and his kiss awakens you.

SNOW WHITE: Hallelujah!

MADAME SEER: The prince asks you to be his bride.

SNOW WHITE: This prince isn't the evil queen's son, is he? Because I sure don't want Queen Savage for my mother-in-law.

MADAME SEER: The prince has a kingdom in a faraway land. You ride off with him to his palace.

SNOW WHITE: Where he gives me a diamond tiara as a wedding present! Oh, thank you, Madame Seer. You truly have a gift.

52. The Brit and the Yank

Cast: SHIRLEY, from England, and MARGIE, from the U.S.
Setting: No special set required. The year is 1945.
Props: None

SHIRLEY: *(Speaking to audience)* **I didn't want to leave. I was ten years old in 1940 when the Nazis began bombing London. The Children's Overseas Reception Board arranged ships to carry thousands of children from targeted British cities to temporary homes in the United States and Canada. My parents sent me to America because it was the only way to ensure that I would be safe, but my mum cried the whole time when she told me that I would be going.**

MARGIE: *(Speaking to audience)* **When my folks applied to take in one of the evacuees, I thought it would be fun. I'm an only child, and I had always wanted a sister, so they requested a girl. I anticipated lots of giggling and shared secrets and trading clothes and doing fun things together. I thought we'd get a girl who was much like me. Instead, we got Shirley.**

SHIRLEY: I had never been away from home before. My parents packed one small bag for me, and the government issued me a gas mask. It was in a clumsy metal case that hung around my neck and clunked against my chest when I walked. All of the children who were being sent to America were taken to the station where we boarded a train. I peered out the window, trying to find Mum and Dad, but I couldn't see them. Many younger children thought it was a grand adventure, but I wept as the train pulled away. I wept again after we boarded the ship and as it sailed away from Britain.

MARGIE: As soon as Shirley got here, I knew we had made a mistake. Talk about Miss Prim and Proper. When we were introduced, I started to hug her, but she got stiff as a board and stepped back. We ended up shaking hands.

SHIRLEY: The authorities called us "Vackies" because we had been evacuated. I was sent to a town in Iowa. On the way there, the train passed a field of large animals, and I was frightened until I learned they were cows. I had never seen a cow before.

MARGIE: I'd never had to share my room. Or my parents.

SHIRLEY: My American parents tried hard, but everything was different here. The school children had few rules. At home in England, the girls are not allowed to talk to the boys. Here, the boys and the girls sit together. Worst of all, the Yanks hardly knew anything about the war. Instead of being worried because London was being bombed, my classmates talked about songs on the "Hit Parade."

MARGIE: I was in the sixth grade. Shirley said she was in something called third form, but she was put in my class. She mortified me on the very first day by refusing to repeat the Pledge of Allegiance. Every school day of my life, starting with kindergarten, everyone in the class has stood at the beginning of the day and repeated the Pledge of Allegiance out loud. Once the war started, some of the kids said the pledge extra loud because they had family members in the army or navy.

SHIRLEY: The first day of school was terrible. The teacher, Mrs. Ruston, expected me to repeat the Pledge of Allegiance along with the rest of the class. I told her I could not do that. She handed me a piece of paper and said those were the words, and if I didn't know them by heart yet, I could read them until I had them

memorized.

MARGIE: Mrs. Ruston even gave her the words, but she still didn't say them.

SHIRLEY: I was sorry to make the other children angry with me on my first day, but I am a British citizen, and I cannot swear my loyalty to another country's flag. My allegiance belongs to King George. I explained this to Mrs. Ruston, who said as long as I stood up and showed respect by placing my hand on my heart, I didn't have to say the words.

MARGIE: After that, the other kids didn't want anything to do with her, especially John and Julia, whose brother got killed fighting in the war. A gold star hangs in the window of their home, and everyone in town is proud of their family's sacrifice.

SHIRLEY: The only good part was that my American hosts had a cat. Johnny was a tabby cat with white feet that looked a little bit like my Winston did. He let me pet him the very first night, and when he purred, I almost felt as if I were home with Winston.

MARGIE: As if it wasn't bad enough to have to share my room, Shirley kept trying to hold my cat. Johnny didn't seem to mind; in fact, he purred and settled on her lap, but still, he was my cat and she shouldn't have pretended that he belonged to her.

SHIRLEY: The worst part of leaving London, even worse than saying goodbye to Mum and Dad, was taking Winston to the veterinarian clinic to be put down. There was a long line of other people with their animals, all waiting to do the same thing. Tears streamed down our faces as we told each other it was the kindest thing to do for our puss. I was being sent to America, Dad was called up for the Territorial Army, and Mum hoped to stay in London, but she had no way to protect Winston. He did not know what an

air raid siren meant, and animals weren't allowed in the underground shelters.

MARGIE: When we went to bed that first night, I said what Mom and Dad have always said to me: "Good night. Sleep tight. Don't let the bedbugs bite." And do you know what Shirley said? She said, "Oh, no! You have them here too?" I've never seen a bedbug in my life, but apparently where she came from they were common. I hoped she hadn't brought any with her.

SHIRLEY: My new classmates and I were out on the playground during recess one day when an airplane flew over. I quickly dropped to the ground and covered my head, as I had been taught to do. The Yanks all gathered 'round and laughed at me.

MARGIE: I felt sorry for her when that airplane scared her. I told the other kids they'd duck too if their school had been bombed.

SHIRLEY: One morning in class, Mrs. Ruston asked if I had seen that day's newspaper. I had not, so she showed me the story. A ship, *City of Benares,* that was part of the Children's Overseas Reception Board program, had been torpedoed by a German U-boat, and sunk. Of the ninety children aboard, only seven survived. Instead of being kept safe until the war was over, those eighty-three children died at sea. I burst into tears.

MARGIE: Everyone felt sorry for Shirley when Mrs. Ruston told us about the ship that sank. We all knew it could have happened to her.

SHIRLEY: The Yanks asked me questions that day, about what it had been like to leave home and sail across the ocean. When I told them I had never ridden in a vehicle of any kind until I boarded the train, they were astonished.

MARGIE: Shirley had terrible nightmares at first. She

would wake up crying, and that woke me up too. If Mom heard her, she would come in and sit on the edge of Shirley's bed and sing softly to her. It seemed strange to hear my mom singing "You Are My Sunshine" to someone else. That's what she always sang to me when I was sick.

SHIRLEY: I felt safe in my American town, but feeling safe is not enough when the ones you love are not safe too. Every day, I longed for a letter from home. I craved news of the war, wondering if my dad was fighting the Nazis, wondering if I would ever see him again.

MARGIE: Shirley could never relax and have fun. In the middle of a game of Monopoly, she turned on the radio to hear the war news. After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Dad bought a map of Europe, and every day he and Shirley located the places that were in the news.

SHIRLEY: One Saturday afternoon, we went to the movies. I was excited to see my first movie, but before it began, the theater showed "The March of Time." There were pictures of bombed-out buildings. The reporter told of huge casualties.

MARGIE: She got hysterical in the theater, and we had to leave without seeing *Dumbo.* I think that day was when I finally understood what Shirley was going through. I quit being disappointed that she wasn't like me and started to see how brave she was, and how lonely.

SHIRLEY: When December came that first year, I told Margie about Father Christmas, and she told me about Santa Claus. My gift from Father Christmas the year before had been a fresh orange. Food was rationed, and an orange was a wonderful treat.

MARGIE: My family isn't wealthy, but I realized how I took plentiful food for granted. There had never

been a Christmas when my only gift was a piece of fruit.

SHIRLEY: When I stepped away from Mum and Dad back then to go to the train station, we all thought the war would end soon. We thought I would return home in less than a year. Instead, I stayed with my American family for three years.

MARGIE: I was twelve when Shirley moved in. Now I am fifteen, and she is leaving today. At first there were times when I couldn't wait to get rid of her. Now, I'm sorry to see her go.

SHIRLEY: Three long years. I'm afraid Mum and Dad might not recognize me, but I know I'll recognize them. I'm so grateful that they both survived. They will be there to welcome me home.

MARGIE: *(Talks directly to SHIRLEY.)* Johnny is going to miss you. He'll have to sleep on my bed now, like he used to do before you came.

SHIRLEY: *(Talks directly to MARGIE.)* You must pet Johnny every night and make him purr. If I'm allowed to have another cat when I get home, I will get a girl cat and name her Margie, after you.

MARGIE: Good-bye, Shirley. Be sure to write. I'll miss you.

SHIRLEY: I'll miss you too. *(MARGIE starts to extend her hand, as if to shake hands. SHIRLEY smiles, throws her arms around MARGIE, and the girls hug.)*

53. Backstage Pass

Cast: CAROLINE and SAMANTHA
Setting: A line outside a concert venue
Props: Two sweatshirts: Caroline's should have a likeness of an artist or logo on it, and Samantha's should be plain. A slip of paper cut to look like a ticket is in the pocket of the plain sweatshirt.

(As scene opens, CAROLINE is standing facing one side of the stage, bouncing impatiently on her toes and ostensibly the first to line up for the concert. SAMANTHA enters from the opposite side of the stage looking bored and walks toward CAROLINE.)

SAMANTHA: Caroline? Ew. What are you doing here?

CAROLINE: *(Turns to face SAMANTHA.)* **Oh. Hi, Samantha! I didn't know you were coming to this concert.**

SAMANTHA: *(Rolls eyes.)* **I didn't know *you'd* be here, or I might not have.**

CAROLINE: Of course I'm here! I'm so obsessed with Jeremy Jefferson. Have you never noticed that I wear this Jer-Jeff sweatshirt every day? I can't believe he's actually playing a show in our city! I've never been this excited for anything in my life. I spent every penny in my piggy bank on this ticket. And I'll still be doing chores for my mom and dad for a month. But this show is worth it.

SAMANTHA: You have a piggy bank? That's cute.

CAROLINE: Well ... *had* one. It's empty now.

SAMANTHA: Why are you here so early, anyway? The show doesn't start until, like, seven o'clock.

CAROLINE: I have to be in the front row!

SAMANTHA: What a waste of your afternoon.

CAROLINE: What do you mean? You're here too!

SAMANTHA: Not for the concert. I probably won't even stay for that.

CAROLINE: There's nothing else happening here tonight except for Jeremy Jefferson.

SAMANTHA: I'm early 'cause I have a meet-and-greet pass.

CAROLINE: What?! How did you get that? I called into 95.5 for weeks trying to get a meet-and-greet pass! I thought there was only one!

SAMANTHA: There is.

CAROLINE: But I was listening to the radio and calling in when they chose the winner! It was a man's voice on the phone line.

SAMANTHA: That was my dad.

CAROLINE: Your dad likes Jeremy Jefferson?

SAMANTHA: No, stupid. He was calling in for me. I told him to. He got a few of our housekeepers to keep calling in with him. They had the phone line pretty tied up from what I understand.

CAROLINE: I didn't know you liked Jeremy Jefferson.

SAMANTHA: I don't like him that much.

CAROLINE: You can't be serious.

SAMANTHA: Yeah, he's pretty juvenile for me. I told my dad to get me the ticket like forever ago, but now I'm pretty much over it. I'm surprised you still listen to him.

CAROLINE: Would you sell the ticket to me?

SAMANTHA: *(Snorts.)* **No.**

CAROLINE: Why not? You're not even excited!

SAMANTHA: I'm just going to snap a picture with him to make everyone at school jealous. He is totally cute, even if his music is lame. Besides, you just said you'd spent all your money on a regular old ticket. There's no way you could afford mine.

CAROLINE: I'm sure my parents would give me a loan. They know how much this would mean to me. I can call them right now — *(Begins to reach in pocket for phone.)*

SAMANTHA: Stop it. This is embarrassing to watch. I'm here, I've got the ticket, and I'm going to meet Jeremy Jefferson myself. Honestly, I don't know why you'd even want to make a fool of yourself in front of him. It's lucky I'm a bit more mature than you.

CAROLINE: I wouldn't make a fool of myself. He'd probably appreciate a real fan more than you acting too cool for school. You don't even have any of his merchandise on! I bet he won't smile in a picture with you.

SAMANTHA: What, you really think he cares?

CAROLINE: I know he does! I've read every interview he's ever done. In *Teen Vogue's* November issue, he said fake fans are his number-one pet peeve.

SAMANTHA: *(Trying to look unperturbed)* **Who even reads *Teen Vogue* anymore?**

CAROLINE: You know what? I bet you don't get a picture with him at all. The meet-and-greet pass doesn't necessarily include that. He only does it if he wants to. I read the fine print on his website.

SAMANTHA: Whatever. You're just jealous.

CAROLINE: No, I'm serious.

SAMANTHA: Fine. Caroline, give me your sweatshirt.

CAROLINE: What? No!

SAMANTHA: Why not? Jeremy Jefferson's not even going to see you. You'll be like an ant in the crowd. Besides, if you don't, I'll tell everyone about the time you peed your pants on the first day of middle school.

CAROLINE: What? That didn't happen!

SAMANTHA: So what? I'll say it did. Who are people going to believe, you or me? Give me the sweatshirt. *(CAROLINE reluctantly takes off her sweatshirt and hands it to SAMANTHA, who sheds her own sweatshirt and tosses it carelessly back at CAROLINE. Both put their new sweatshirts on.)*

SAMANTHA: That's better! Jeremy Jefferson is going to love me. Maybe I'll invite you to our wedding, Caroline. But probably not.

CAROLINE: Oh! Here comes the security guard. *(CAROLINE and SAMANTHA look up as if a security guard has opened a door from Off-stage and spoken to them.)*

SAMANTHA: *(Raises hand and smiles sweetly.)* **I'm here for the meet and greet.** *(Pauses as if spoken to again.)* **My ticket? Yes, it's right here.** *(Reaches hand into pants pocket.)* **Hold on, it's in here somewhere.** *(Checks other pocket, then back pockets.)* **Oh, it must be in my sweatshirt pocket. Caroline, look and see.**

CAROLINE: *(She has been watching SAMANTHA search her pockets. Now she reaches her hand slowly into her plain sweatshirt pocket and removes ticket. She looks down at it as it dawns on her what has happened. Looks up as if to security guard and slowly holds ticket up as if showing it to him.)* **Here it is.**

SAMANTHA: Caroline, give it here.

CAROLINE: *(Points Off-stage, looking to "security guard.")* **This way?**

SAMANTHA: *Wait!* That's my ticket!

CAROLINE: *(Turns back to SAMANTHA.)* **Do I need to have security call someone about you? I think you've been standing for too long in the hot sun. Honestly, some fans just can't handle their excitement.** *(She walks Off-stage, as if through a door escorted by security.)*

SAMANTHA: *(Rushes forward after CAROLINE and begins to bang and kick closed "door.")* ***Caroline!*** **Get back here! You nasty little thief! *Caroline!***

54. Two by Two

Characters: MOOLIE and WOOLY. Note that both characters sing some of their lines.
Setting: No special set required.
Props: None

MOOLIE: Are you going to be in the *Noah's Ark* play?
WOOLY: Unfortunately, yes. I tried to get out of it, but I need the class credit.
MOOLIE: So do I. When I signed up for drama class, I thought we'd do *Romeo and Juliet* or *A Streetcar Named Desire*. I never imagined that I'd be stuck playing the part of a cow.
WOOLY: At least cows are proactive. I play one of the sheep.
MOOLIE: What's proactive about cows?
WOOLY: When it's milking time, they go home all by themselves. Sheep never lead the way; they only follow.
MOOLIE: On the other hand, sheep frolic. Cows plod.
WOOLY: This part doesn't call for frolicking. In fact, there isn't much action in the script. All we do is walk onto the ark, two by two. Instead of looking sheepish, I'd like to ram into something. Maybe butt heads with the other sheep.
MOOLIE: You could add some stage business of your own. That's what I plan to do. Even though it's a terrible script, I want my performance to be the cream of the crop.
WOOLY: What are you going to do?
MOOLIE: I call it the bovine ballet. *(MOOLIE does a few quick dance steps, while singing)* **Moo, moo. Moo, moo, m-moo. If there are any talent scouts in the audience, my act will be an instant cash cow.**
WOOLY: What if the director says you can't dance?
MOOLIE: He wouldn't dairy.

WOOLY: He might worry that the horses will be jealous if you're outstanding in your field.

MOOLIE: I refuse to be cowed by the director. When the other animals see my dance, they'll butter me up. They'll want to learn my smoooooth mooooves.

WOOLY: Is your family coming?

MOOLIE: I told them it's a cheesy play and to stay home, but they'll be here with bells on. What about your family? Were you able to stall them?

WOOLY: No. My parents are going to corral my siblings and shepherd them over here.

MOOLIE: My sister is coming voluntarily. She's always said I was born in a barn, and she thinks this production proves it.

WOOLY: At least it will be easy credit since we don't have any lines to memorize.

MOOLIE: I may add some lines. As long as I'm stuck playing a cow, I intend to milk it for all it's worth.

WOOLY: What do you plan to say?

MOOLIE: I'm going to talk the person who plays the other cow into using the name Gertrude. Then, when I see her, I can say, "Yo, Gert!" Get it? Yogurt?

WOOLY: *(Groans.)* **What other lines are you adding?**

MOOLIE: I don't know yet.

WOOLY: You could recite a poem.

MOOLIE: "Little boy blue, come blow your horn. *(MOOLIE gestures toward WOOLY.)* **The sheep's in the meadow."**

WOOLY: *(Gestures toward MOOLIE.)* **"The cow's in the corn."**

MOOLIE: Perfect!

WOOLY: Maybe I could sing. *(Sings.)* **"Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?"**

MOOLIE: Sweet! You have to do that.

WOOLY: *(Sings.)* **"Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb."**

MOOLIE: *(Applauds, and then recites.)* **"Hey, diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon."** *(MOOLIE leaps in the air.)*

WOOLY: I'd like to sing "Ewe Are My Sunshine." You know, E-W-E? Ewe? But I'm afraid the audience wouldn't get it.

MOOLIE: Maybe you should stick to "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep."

WOOLY: Why don't you sing too?

MOOLIE: I'm too much of a *cow*ard to sing in front of a crowd.

WOOLY: You shouldn't keep your talent bottled up.

MOOLIE: There's an oldie called "*Cud*-dle up a Little Closer."

WOOLY: My grandpa sings, "There's an Old Cow Hand."

MOOLIE: I know! Let's sing a duet! I won't be nervous if we sing together. We could do "Home on the Range."

WOOLY: That's about deer and antelope, not cows and sheep.

MOOLIE: We'll change the lyrics.

WOOLY: That might be an infringement of copyright. That would be baaaad. You don't want to get thrown in the pen.

MOOLIE: "Home on the Range" is probably in the public domain. Come on! It be*hooves* us to do something clever.

WOOLY: If we wear costumes, I'll be a black sheep.

MOOLIE: I can wear a jersey.

WOOLY: What if the director doesn't like our additions? What if he kicks us out of the show?

MOOLIE: We won't sing or dance at the rehearsal. We'll wait until the performance and surprise everyone. We'll call them "certified organic" acts.

WOOLY: We're the last animals to enter. I hope our families aren't *ashleep* by then.

MOOLIE: Make sure they have plenty of *calf*-eine before the show.

WOOLY: Does my wool coat look OK? *(Turns in a circle.)*

MOOLIE: Yes. It's a perfect fit. What about my cowlick? *(Points to forehead.)*

WOOLY: *(Looks at MOOLIE's head.)* **As long as you don't scowl, you look fine.**

MOOLIE: It'll be a Grade A show!

WOOLY: It'll be shear delight!

MOOLIE: Let's do it!

WOOLY: Yes!

MOOLIE and WOOLY: *(Together, singing)* **"Oh, give me a home, where the animals roam,**
Where the sheep and the dairy cows play."

MOOLIE: Too bad we don't get paid for this performance. I could use some *moo*-lah.

WOOLY: At least they'll flock to get our *hoof*-ographs.

MOOLIE and WOOLY: *(Together, singing:)* **"Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,**
And the students will all get an A."

MOOLIE: We are *udder*-ly amazing! *(They exit, singing together, "Home, home on the range.")*

About the Authors

PEG KEHRET has won numerous awards for her middle grade books, including more than fifty state Children's Choice Awards, the PEN Center West Award in Children's Literature, and the Golden Kite Award from the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators. Her plays are widely produced, and her books of monologues are staples for speech competitions and drama classes. Her most recent book is a memoir, *Animals Welcome: A Life of Reading, Writing, and Rescue.* Peg lives in Washington State near Mt. Rainier National Park.

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MERIWETHER PUBLISHING
A division of Pioneer Drama Service, Inc.

ISBN 978-1-56608-196-2
51795
9 781566 081962

$17.95